



To: Senate Education Committee
From: Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust
Laura Soares, CEO/President
Tim Vincent, Multi-Line Program Manager
Subject: S.46 (H.3)

February 5, 2019

Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust (VSBIT) is in support of S.46 (H.3) and the creation of the Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group. As one of the prominent entities to provide Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying trainings to educators throughout the state of Vermont over the last decade, VSBIT believes that it could add valuable experience and insights to the Working Group and requests that the Senate Education Committee consider revising the language of the bill as introduced to include VSBIT as a member to the Working Group.

While curriculum standards and content are not VSBIT's area of expertise, we believe that we would provide valuable input and expertise into the (2) Duty of the Working Group outlined on page 8 of 12 of the bill as introduced:

[\(2\) The Working Group may review all existing State statutes regarding school policies and recommend to the General Assembly proposed statutory changes..."](#)

One of VSBIT's legal counsel, Heather Thomas Lynn, has extensive experience in cases brought under Vermont's peer harassment statutes both before Vermont and federal courts as well as the Vermont Human Rights Commission and U.S. Dept. of Education's Office of Civil Rights. She participated in the 2012 and 2015 updates to the Vermont Agency of Education Model Policies and Procedures related to hazing, harassment and bullying. VSBIT can bring that experience to the table.

VSBIT is also cognizant of the discriminatory, racist, sexist, and overall intolerant behaviors that have infiltrated not just the national landscape but also our State of Vermont. It has brought forth a call to action that questions whether the current legislative landscape provides sufficient protections to at-risk individuals. It is for that reason that VSBIT will be implementing a training series beginning in the 2019/2020 school year to increase awareness and understanding of implicit bias and to instruct Vermont educators as to the scope and range of behaviors which are already covered in the current statutes, policies and procedures.

VSBIT is uniquely positioned as an organization that has the experience in the development of policies and procedures while also being a leader in the implementation of providing Vermont educators with the training in how to best address bias incidents. It is for that reason that we request the Senate Education Committee consider revising the language of the bill as introduced to include VSBIT as a member to the Working Group.

We greatly appreciate your time and consideration.