

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOUTH ORANGE AND MAPLEWOOD, NJ
PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
AUGUST 29, 2024**

RESOLUTION 4655

FOR ACTION

**SUBJECT: APPROVE THE ANTI-BULLYING BILL OF RIGHTS ACT FUNDS
REQUEST**

WHEREAS, The New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (ABR), also known as P.L. 2010, Chapter 122, was established by the New Jersey legislature in 2011 to combat bullying in public schools throughout the state. The updated legislation significantly enhanced the anti-bullying framework by refining the definition of bullying, which had been broadly defined in 2002 as any action that caused harm to a student. The revised law expanded the definition of bullying, as any action that creates a hostile school environment or infringes on a student's rights at school. Additionally, the ABR was amended on March 26, 2012, in part, to include provisions for funding of certain activities required under the bill. Compliance with the ABR is required by state law.

Most recently, the 2023 New Jersey Anti-Bullying Task Force (ABTF) report confirmed incidents of HIBs and bias, including cyberbullying and hate speech, are at the highest levels the state has seen since it started collecting data in 2018.

The South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education supports anti-bullying and has updated its policies to comply with the ABR Act. Schools require ongoing modern strategies to establish anti-bullying and climate and culture efforts that will create positive outcomes for students; and

WHEREAS, it is the right of every child, to access a free public K-12 education and the District welcomes and supports all students;

WHEREAS, the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education supports anti-bullying, has updated its policies to comply with the ABR, and supports the district's commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive and safe school environment for our students, staff, families, and caregivers;

WHEREAS, The New Jersey ABR Act (P.L. 2010 Chapter 122) was established to combat bullying, bias and hate-speech, and was amended to provide funding of certain

activities required under the bill, and state law N.J.S.A 18A:37-13 that requires compliance;

WHEREAS, ABR Funding has not been provided by the state of New Jersey to the South Orange-Maplewood School District since the 2013-2014 school year.

WHEREAS, the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education is committed to creating a welcoming, inclusive and safe school environment for our students, staff, families, and caregivers.

WHEREAS, It recognizes data shows students are struggling with their mental health now more than ever and the rise of social media usage has contributed to this issue. Adolescents who experience cyberbullying are four times more likely to report suicidal thoughts and attempts than those who do not (Arnon et al., 2022). Per the ABTF report, school staff, as well as parents and caregivers, would benefit from professional learning, resources, and guidance to assist in navigating this topic.

WHEREAS, receiving ABR funds from the state of New Jersey would enable the District to offset the costs of mandated anti-bullying curriculum, enhance staff and teacher training in suicide prevention and in-school safety teams/measures, support anti-bullying specialists, expand youth mental health support measures and address the shortage of ABS staff, thereby improving our universal supports for all students, as well as responsiveness to students who require a higher level of support.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education School District reaffirms its support for the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education School District supports the Anti-Bullying Task Force's request for the state of New Jersey to provide \$5 million in funding for the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act to support all schools' anti-bullying efforts statewide. Our District's goal is to secure a grant of \$100,000 to provide comprehensive anti-bullying programs and resources, ensuring every student has access to the support they need to feel safe, valued, and empowered in our schools.

