

**An Act Addressing Bullying of Children with  
Autism Spectrum Disorder (H. 3804)  
Sponsored by Rep. L'Italien and Sen. Jehlen**

- This bill amends the Autism IEP Act to clarify that IEP Teams must address bullying of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are bullied at a much higher rate than their non-disabled peers. One study found that 94% of children with Asperger's syndrome are routinely victimized by other children. This victimization can include verbal, physical and cyber bullying and attacks by individuals or groups.<sup>1</sup>
- Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are especially vulnerable targets for bullying because they are generally viewed as atypical or "odd" by their peers, and are relatively defenseless in social situations. These children are unable to understand the situation and protect themselves like other students due to the nature of ASD, which impacts communication, social, and behavioral skills.
- Because their disability deprives children with autism of the communication skills necessary to understand signals (such as facial expressions and body language), and deprives them of the skills necessary to protect themselves, these students require specialized teaching, supports, and services to develop strategies to help deal with bullying.
- In addition to critical school-wide bullying prevention programs, children with ASD need supplemental services and strategies to address the unique needs of their disability. These services may focus on preventative measures to avoid being bullied and/or learning skills to respond to bullying to ameliorate the emotional impact.
- The experiences of specialists who work with children on the autism spectrum indicate that children with autism can learn the critical skills necessary to respond to and avoid bullying with the provision of individualized supports and services.<sup>2</sup>
- This bill ensures that supports and services are provided, as appropriate, to address bullying as it impacts individual students through the IEP process. The resultant IEP can effectively mitigate the instances and effects of bullying for children with autism.

<sup>1</sup> Little, Liza (2002). "Middle Class Mothers' Perceptions of Peer and Sibling Victimization Among Children with Asperger's Syndrome and Nonverbal Learning Disorders." *Comprehensive Issues in Pediatric Nursing*, 25:1, pp. 43-54. In the study, 75% were emotionally bullied, 73 % were hit, and 10% were attacked by a group of peers in the one year leading up to the study.

<sup>2</sup> Attwood, Tony (2007). *A Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Dubin, Nick (2007). *Asperger's Syndrome and Bullying: Strategies and Solutions*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.