

To our Nevada Representatives,

I am writing you in support of your budget in regards to the Bullying Awareness funding.

Solving the bullying problem will only come with a cultural change on the subject. Our experiences following the suicide death of our son on June 9 of 2014 illustrates the bigger problem. His bullying started at our church and was spread to his school, something confirmed by suicide notes, chat logs and neighbor kids.

As expected one of the bully's parents became defensive when confronted, certain of their child's innocence, yet never asking why our claim was made. What was not expected is our Church's response to our son's suicide death. As we sought for his death to be addressed, for something to be learned from it, church leaders became very defensive, even angry. Confused at the hostility we were receiving during this most painful time, we inquired from friends as to why it was happening. Their answers can be summed up in two words, 'liability concerns'. This is a pattern that shows up time and time again in regards to bullying, bullying suicides. If a church responds to grieving parents in this manner, what's to be expected from society at large, our schools?

Presently and as a result of 'liability concerns', attorneys are dominating the formation of policy in regards to bullying. Society is placing the safety and well being of our children in the hands of those who focus on monetary concerns, not with social and mental health professionals as it should be. Like attorneys, these professionals need to be compensated for their expertise, as our bullying problem will not go away without funding.

Defenders of bullying suicide use terms like 'mental illness' and 'societal problem' to minimize their role and to stonewall discussion, thus inhibiting solutions to bullying. They choose not to explore these terms very far, as doing so would invalidate their use.

Bullying suicide is most certainly a result of mental illness. Research by the *The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development* found that "Children and adolescents who are bullied are at increased risk for mental health problems." Bullying itself is a likely cause of the mental health issues found in bullying suicide cases. Those same studies also found that the bullies are at "increased risk for substance abuse, academic problems and violence to others later in life". Bullying is not just a problem for the bullied child's family. Bullying becomes a problem for society at large if left unaddressed, specifically in the costs of caring for mentally ill and incarcerated adults. Addressing bullying not only saves lives, but also is a wise fiscal choice. Supporting the Bullying Awareness funding is the right thing to do.

Bullying is also a 'societal problem', but that is a poor excuse as to why society should not work on it. Another form of bullying, racism, was also a societal problem. Much progress has been made to correct the ugly results of racism because it wasn't acceptable as a 'societal problem' by many. The well being of our children deserves the same attention. The abuse some of our children receive everyday at school is unacceptable, the type of abuse we would never tolerate if it were our wives, brothers, or mothers while at work. Our children deserve similar protections as adults.

Bullying is a cultural problem that society needs to change. Society must promote that it is "un-cool" to bully another, much like it is promoted that it is "un-cool" to use the 'N word'. Children must be taught that it is okay and not to be embarrassed to ask for help, even making it 'cool' to ask for help if needed.

Bullying is a problem that will not be solved quickly, but for certain will never be solved if society is not working on it. It is both morally and fiscally a wise decision to fund the Bullying Awareness program as found in Governor Sandoval's budget, something I advocate in favor of.

Respectfully,

Brian Bresee