

By Katie Curley Katzman Staff writer

Bullying bill earns mixed reviews

Apr 30, 2010

But while many schools will be forced to review their policies and training regarding bullying, the lack of penalties leads some to wonder if it will make a significant difference.

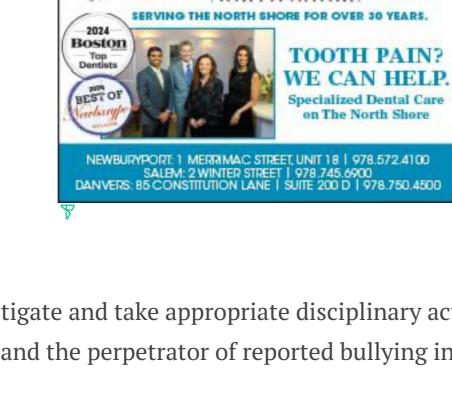
emotional harm that leave students in fear of harm or create a hostile environment for the student.

to parents.

media networks like Twitter or Facebook. But the focus of the bill is on the responsibility of school officials to report such incidences. Police

must also be notified if the abuse could be deemed criminal harassment, stalking, witness

While the bill wouldn't punish teachers who witness bullying and don't make a report, it does say



something that's been going on a while?'"

State Rep. Mike Costello, D-Newburyport, who voted in favor of the bullying bill, which passed the

"Representative Costello is supportive of this bill; it engages all the right people including parents, school administration and children," Adam Martignetti, chief of staff for Costello said. "There are criminal statutes already on the books that can be used in these circumstances; this bill

But for police left with no new penalties to combat bullying, the passage of the legislation seems geared toward calming residents' anger over recent incidents and not helping the victims of bullying, Newburyport Inspector Brian Brunault said.

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page with a classmate's name, then using it to harass other students.

but I would have liked to see harsher punishments."

hopeful that the bill will make a change.

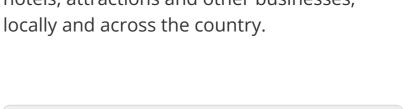


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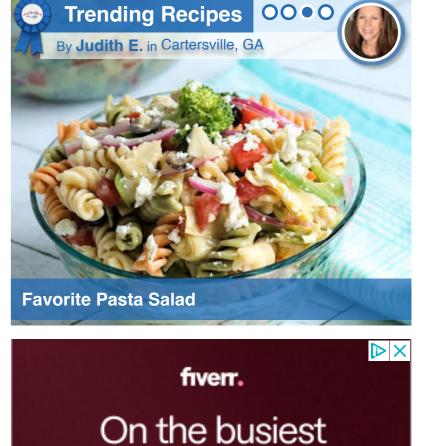
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# NEWBURYPORT — The Bay State is poised to implement new anti-bullying laws that put a renewed focus on teachers' responsibility once Gov. Deval Patrick signs the bill next week.

Patrick indicated he plans to sign it into law.

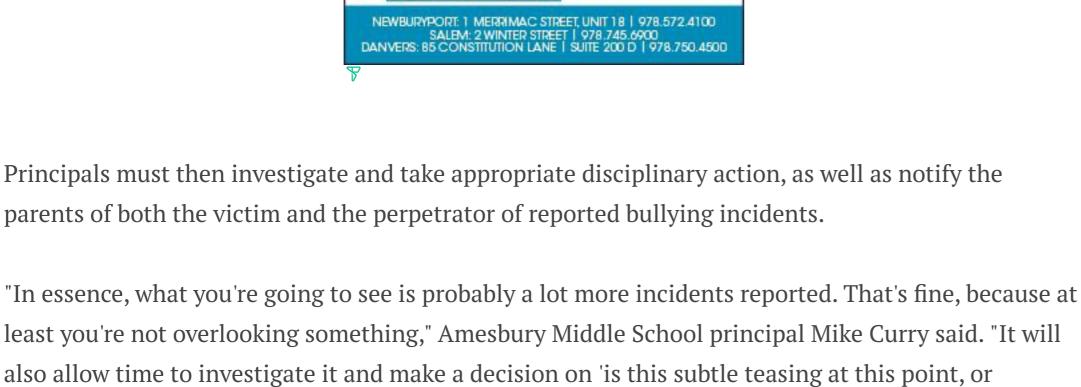
intimidation or making annoying telephone calls.

Earlier this week, the House and Senate passed legislation that defines bullying as acts of physical or

Under the law, public and private schools must offer anti-bullying curriculum, schools must create a bullying intervention plan, and principals are mandated to investigate complaints and report results

The bill prohibits bullying on school property and outlaws cyber-bullying through e-mail or social

that school staff will be required to report bullying incidents to their principal.



House last month, has said the bill strengthens the laws already on the books.

complements those statutes."

Martignetti said that with the focus on education and prevention, Costello feels this is the right

approach to take to combat bullying. "It brings the relevant parties to the table and raises awareness around the issue," Martignetti said. "When people are talking about it in the schools and it is part of the curriculum, everyone is more cognizant of the program. This bill goes to the root of the problem before it becomes an issue where

"I'm disappointed," Brunault said. "I hoped they would make it a crime."

failing to intervene.

something really bad happens."

"Bullying doesn't stop in middle school or high school," Brunault said. "It carries over into the work environment or sports." Earlier this month, Northwestern District Attorney Elizabeth Scheibel filed criminal charges against nine students for bullying Phoebe Prince, the 15-year-old South Hadley girl who investigators say

was so overwhelmed by bullying that she committed suicide. Scheibel also blasted school officials for

Brunault, who charged three Newburyport teenagers in February in relation to a cyber-bullying case,

theft to make a case. The Newburyport teens were charged with identity theft for creating a Facebook

are left to find other criminal charges, such as harassment, or in cases of cyber-bullying, identity

Public outcry and widespread anger over the deaths of Prince as well as 11-year-old Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover of Springfield fueled support for the bill.

"This was the easy way out," Brunault said. "There was a lot of public pressure to get something done,

harassment," DeRosa said. "It's only when students feel safe that they can really learn."

"I think it's a great piece of legislation, because I think any student should feel free from any kind of

Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School Superintendent William DeRosa said he is

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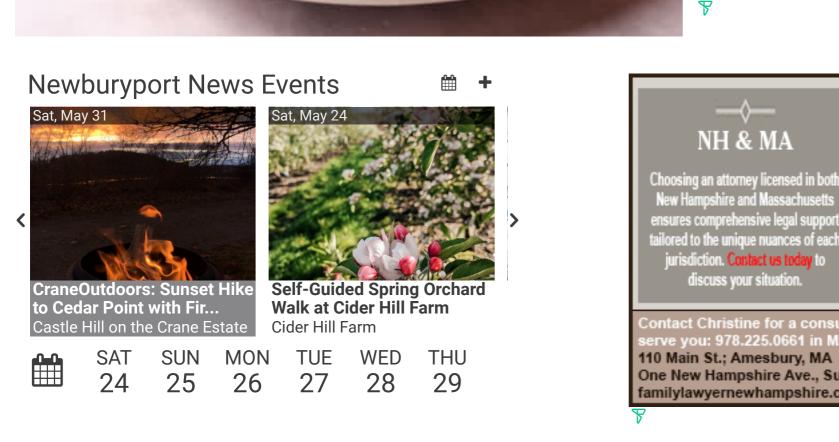
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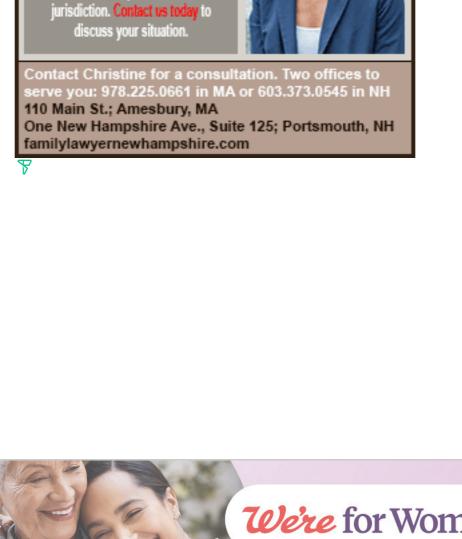
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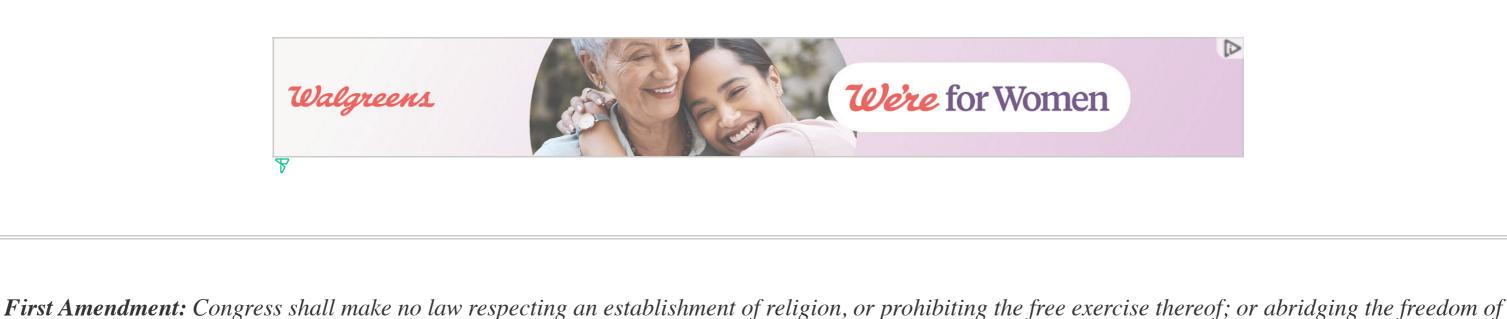
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