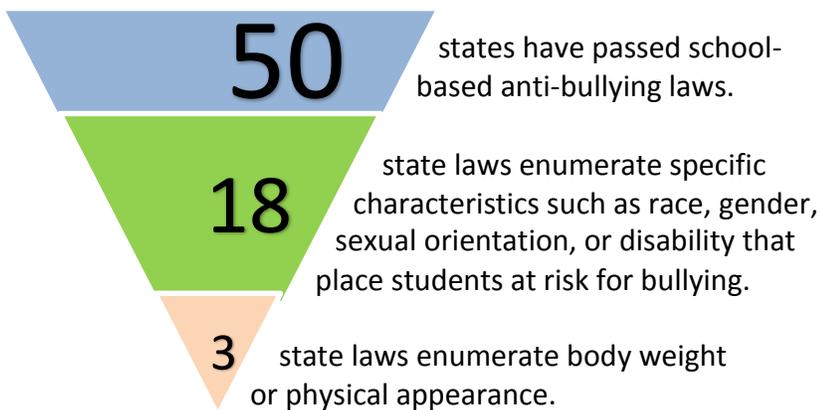


## Enumeration of Weight in Anti-Bullying Policies

Despite the increased risk of students with overweight or obesity being bullied and teased in school, anti-bullying policies often fail to adequately protect these vulnerable students. Weight-based victimization is one of the most prevalent forms of teasing and bullying in the school setting, and leads to numerous consequences for students' health. There is a clear need to ensure that "body weight" is included in anti-bullying policies.<sup>1</sup>

### **Current Anti-Bullying Laws:**



**There is a need to include body weight in anti-bullying policies because...**

### **1 Weight-based teasing and bullying is a significant problem.**

*Compared to other reasons for bullying such as sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, or disability, research shows that*

*Parents and students* view 'being overweight' to be the most common reason for bullying, teasing, and name-calling at school.<sup>2,3</sup>

*Teachers* consider weight-based bullying to be the most problematic form of bullying in school.<sup>4</sup>



**2** *There is considerable public support for strengthening policies and laws to better protect students from weight-based bullying.*<sup>5,6</sup>

A national study of over 900 parents in the U.S.<sup>5</sup> found that,

**86.5%** of parents agreed that schools should implement anti-bullying policies that protect students with overweight and obesity from being bullied.

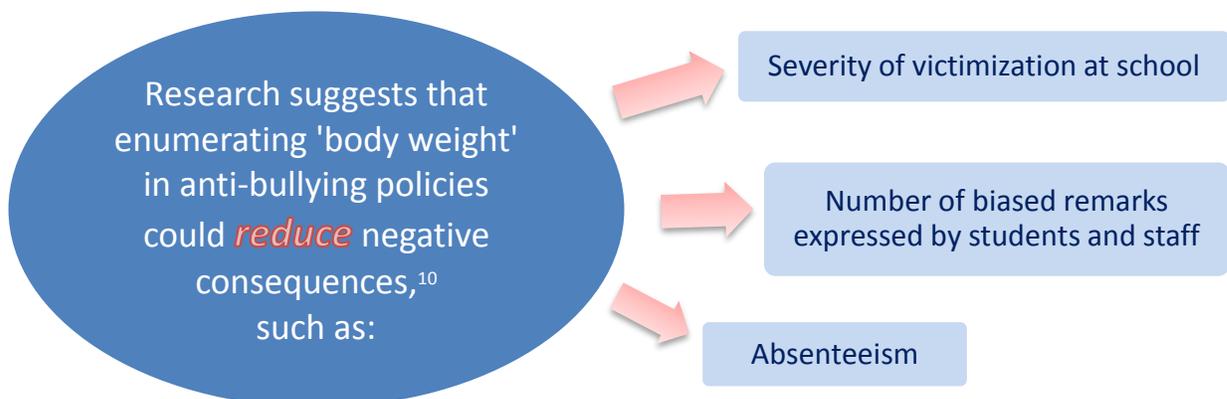
**81.5%** of parents agreed that existing state anti-bullying laws should include protections against weight-related bullying.

**75%** of parents agreed that states should pass anti-bullying laws to prohibit weight-related bullying.

Additionally, the US Department of Education and many leading national organizations such as the American Bar Association, the National Educational Association, and Anti-Defamation League, support the adoption of “enumerated” school anti-bullying policies, which are policies that specifically list characteristics that place youth at risk for bullying, such as body weight.

**3** *Including “weight” in anti-bullying policies can help students feel safer in school and improve their school functioning.*

Students with overweight or obesity often experience multiple forms of victimization including being made fun of, socially excluded, or physically harassed.<sup>3</sup> Although peers and friends are the most common perpetrators of bullying and teasing, teachers and coaches are sometimes sources of victimization.<sup>7</sup> Along with a range of harmful physical and emotional consequences, weight-based victimization is associated with poorer school performance<sup>8</sup> and a greater likelihood of skipping school.<sup>9</sup>





***Strengthening existing policies and laws to include ‘body weight’ as a characteristic that places youth at risk for bullying provides clear language for teachers, school personnel, and students to prevent and intervene in bullying and teasing incidents based on weight.***

Legal experts suggest that enumeration of specific characteristics in anti-bullying policies conveys a concrete message that bullying based on certain characteristics is not permissible, and encourages earlier reporting of harassment by victims.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, in schools that have anti-bullying policies with clear language about characteristics that place youth at risk for bullying, teachers intervene more often and effectively in response to bullying incidents based on those specific characteristics, compared to schools that do not enumerate specific characteristics that place youth at risk.<sup>10</sup>

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