



**Testimony on House Bill 155, School Bullying Policies
Submitted to the House Education Committee
The Hon. Gerald Stebelton, Chair
By Karen Rainey, AAUW/Ohio Public Policy Advocate
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Good Afternoon, Chairman Stebelton and members of the committee. My name is Karen Rainey, and I represent AAUW/Ohio (the American Association of University Women), with more than 1,500 members in 50 branches throughout Ohio and 100,000 members nationwide. AAUW's mission is to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research. AAUW's position on educational opportunity approaches bullying as a threat to the health and safety of children. Simply put, children cannot learn if they don't feel safe.

Nationally, AAUW has conducted research resulting in publications, including the publication "Hostile Hallways," documenting the extent of harassment and bullying in our schools. Recent research shows that bullying affects nearly one in three American school children in grades six through ten. The Girl Scout Research Institute reports that girls, in particular, are most concerned about their emotional safety. AAUW supports strong policies that deter bullying and thereby improve school climate and increase student achievement.

House Bill 155 addresses cyberbullying, a new form of intimidation that has been shown to be at least as threatening as more familiar forms of bullying. AAUW believes that this bill will help to give schools the authority and tools needed to curb cyberbullying and create safe learning environments.

Our one concern is that enforcement of the bill's measures, particularly relating to incidents off school property, may be difficult for school administrators. However, we understand that this is not really a substantial change from current law.

We respectfully ask that the committee act favorably toward this bill.

AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research. AAUW, founded in 1881, is open to all graduates who hold an associate or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university. In principle and practice, AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership.