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Quinn Signs Anti-bullying Legislation Into Law

Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed new legislation into law June 27 that expands the state's school bullying laws to include harassment based on sexual orientation.

Bullying can paralyze a student and has challenged teachers and administers in their attempts to prevent it.

As CBS 2's Vince Gerasole reports a new Illinois law, signed Sunday, gives the state more muscle when it comes to protecting kids from bullies.

In a short film, Anna Rangos, a senior at Main South High School, documented the bullying gay and bisexual teens often endure. But recently, harassment because of her writings led Anna to miss a week of classes.

"I felt unsafe about going to school and nervous about being there and I didn't enjoy having to deal with the harassment," Rangos said.

Legislation signed into law by Governor Pat Quinn Sunday expands the state's school bullying laws to include harassment based on sexual orientation.

"It really has not been made clear to school administrators and principals that that's unacceptable in our schools," said Shannon Sullivan from the Illinois Safe School's Alliance, which lobbied in favor of the law.

"It can be traumatic and if someone is singled out, harassed, and bullied it can harm them for the rest of their lives," said Quinn, just after signing the law.

The new law also further defines bullying to include electronic harassment through texting or social networking sites -- that's whether students are subject to taunting based on race, gender, religion, physical disability and now sexual orientation, according to Darren Reisberg from the Illinois Board of Education.

"This allows us to go in and talk to a superintendent or principal and let them know what's happening is against the law," said Reisberg.

Supporters of the law say many districts felt students needed to toughen up when facing this type of bullying, but now they'll be required to have a plan in place to address these matters. If not, their state financing can be pulled.

"We ultimately have the ability to come in and address the district's funding," said Reisberg.

The law can't erase the pain felt by students like Rangos, but it gives schools a tool to challenge harassment when it surfaces.

This law also requires Illinois schools to have gang-prevention training and creates a 15-member School Bullying Prevention Task Force. The task force must prepare a report for the Illinois governor by March 1.

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