

**Written Testimony Submitted to
The Commission to Review Statutes Relative to Implementation of the School Bullying Law
February 9, 2011**

**Submitted by:
Jeffrey R. Stone, Co-chair, GREATER BOSTON CIVIL RIGHTS COALITION**

We greatly appreciate the work of the Commission members and the Attorney General in holding these hearings and reviewing the Commonwealth's new anti-bullying law.

The Greater Boston Civil Rights Coalition strongly supported passage of the Commonwealth's anti-bullying legislation and we testified at a lengthy legislative hearing in November 2009. We value the current process of reviewing the anti-bullying law for possible improvements.

Rather than focus on specifics, we would urge Commission members to keep two critical principles in mind as you perform this review:

1. The overarching goal of any amendments or the creation of related new statutes should be the same as the motivation for creation of the original law: to avoid and address pain and damage to children caused by bullying. This goal should supersede the convenience of school districts and others charged with implementing the law or the interests of those who commit acts of bullying or who defend the latter.
2. Attention, action and accountability are the key components of the anti-bullying law. We must not backpedal on our efforts to protect children by weakening these components.

Abundant testimony and debate during deliberations on this legislation made clear that far too often, certain school personnel, parents and others have characterized bullying as an inevitable rite of passage to be survived - if possible - by those who are targeted. They have failed to intervene and sometimes even ridiculed victims. Well-publicized tragedies in Massachusetts captured national attention but they are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the suffering and harm experienced by our young people. With the new law's requirements for attention, action and accountability, bullying is being taken seriously and is being addressed in Massachusetts schools. To be sure, it is a challenge to cover all the bases in addressing bullying but that is no excuse for weakening the law. We must continue to strengthen and support robust anti-bullying efforts in our school districts and communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

**Jeffrey R. Stone
Co-chair, GREATER BOSTON CIVIL RIGHTS COALITION**

Founded in 1979, the GBCRC is Greater Boston's oldest coalition of community leaders working together to safeguard and promote civil rights. The Coalition showcases civil rights-related work and helps mobilize advocates for public policies that protect and enhance civil rights at local, state and national levels. Contact the GBCRC at GBCRC1979@gmail.com.