

August 18, 2009

To the Honorable Members of the House of Representatives,
96th General Assembly,

In accordance with Article IV, Section 9(e) of the Illinois Constitution, I hereby return House Bill 2547 with the following specific recommendation for change.

This legislation seeks to achieve a laudable goal. I commend the sponsors of this legislation for their commitment to the protection of children, and for their commitment to promoting civil and human rights generally.

Although I wholeheartedly endorse the objectives of this legislation, the means by which it proposes to achieve this objective are problematic. Before I approve legislation committing this administration to any task, I must be sure that there are sufficient resources and structures in place to perform the task to the high standard of professionalism I expect of all state employees.

The bill, as drafted, beginning January 1, 2010, would give the Illinois Department of Human Rights the jurisdiction to consider charges of severe bullying pervasive harassment against children.

It is beyond question that we have a collective responsibility to ensure that children have access to education, a right guaranteed by the Illinois Constitution, in a safe and nurturing environment, free of harassment or duress of any kind.

Yet, extending the jurisdiction of the Department in this way without providing the staff and resources necessary to properly handle these matters would not in my judgment or the Department's judgment reduce the instance of harassment and bullying in schools.

Moreover, currently, the Department's cases generally involve adults. The proper handling of children's issues requires professionals trained in child-specific psychology, law, and medicine. The Department must have these resources in place in order to handle the matters contemplated in this statute effectively.

Therefore, pursuant to Article IV, Section 9(e) of the Illinois Constitution of 1970, I hereby return House Bill 2547, entitled "AN ACT concerning civil law." with the following specific recommendation for change:

on page 4, line 21, by replacing "harassment." with "harassment. The Department need not exercise jurisdiction under subsection (3) of this Section unless there are sufficient appropriations available for that purpose.".

With this change, House Bill 2547 will have my approval. I respectfully request your concurrence.

Sincerely,

PAT QUINN
Governor