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## On The Hill

By Bill Lafferty, Director of Federal Relations

On Wednesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>, witnesses testified before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP) hearing on campus safety. Specifically, the growing issue of bullying and hazing on college campuses was examined and especially as it relates to the LGBT community. Witnesses urged congressional leaders to provide additional guidance that would require institutions of higher education to develop clear policies, programs and protocols to combat bullying and hazing on college campuses.

Senator Patty Murray, Democrat from Washington, opened the hearing by highlighting the importance of bystander intervention through student empowerment to create a campus culture that does not tolerate any form of harassment. She raised the Stanford Rape case as an example of the importance of bystander intervention. This case involved the sexual assault of an unconscious female student by former Stanford swimmer, Brock Turner. During this assault, bystander students intervened to stop a sexual assault in progress. Senator Murray also stated that schools need to deliver programming designed to provide students with the skill set necessary to understand how to safely confront and intervene during incidents of violence.

Each of the participating witnesses were given an opportunity to provide brief opening remarks and then were asked some follow-up questions by those Senators in attendance. The hearing focused on hazing and bullying, but more specifically on awareness, prevention, policy development, response, and proactive intervention.

Bystander intervention was cited as an example of research based intervention that has had a measurable impact on reducing incidents of harassment. Researched based prevention programming was emphasized throughout the hearing. Additionally, the importance of establishing collaborative coalitions to assist in providing initial and regularly occurring programs was also emphasized.

Jane Clementi shared her son Tyler's story and encouraged Senators to pass proposed legislation named after her son that would amend the Clery Act and require institutions to establish policies and programs to prevent harassment on campus. Jane Clementi is the co-founder of the Tyler Clementi Foundation. This foundation is an organization created by the Clementi family to address and prevent bullying in memory of Tyler.

Tyler Clementi was a freshman at Rutgers University when in September of 2010 he died by suicide after being cyber bullied by other students. Senators Murray and Baldwin are co-sponsors of the Senate version of the Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Act of 2015 (S.773). This Act Further defines "harassment" to include certain conduct undertaken through technological means that limits a student's ability to benefit from programs, or creates a hostile or abusive educational environment at the school which is based on a student's actual or perceived: Race, Color, National Origin, Sex, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, or Religion.

According to Jean Clementi, the Act would:

- expand harassment prevent programs, ensuring counselling to “targets and perpetrators,”
- educate officials about “ways to prevent and address harassment,” and
- promote research to find the best methods to address the growing problem.

Dr. Elizabeth Allen, Executive Director of StopHazing.org and professor at the University of Maine has conducted extensive research in the area of hazing with a focus on strategies to prevent hazing. Dr. Allen described “hazing as an emerging field of research and prevention practice.” Dr. Allen defined hazing and the nature and extent of hazing on college campuses and among specific student groups and cultures. She further stated that “hazing extends far beyond pranks and antics..... “Troubling, alcohol use, sexual harassment and assault are commonly used in hazing practices on campuses.”

Dr. Melynda Huskey, Interim Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students at Washington State University (WSU) was applauded by Senator Murray for improving campus safety at WSU in the aftermath of a Title IX program review. Dr. Huskey described alcohol’s impact on decision making as it relates to bullying, hazing, and harassment and the need to use best evidence based practices for prevention and the need for community collaborations, on and off campus, to make campuses safer.

Ms. Wendy Krisak, Director of the Counseling Center at DeSales University was instrumental in developing a program at her institution designed to teach students how to be successful peer counselors. She cited examples of DeSales’ policies and procedures related to hazing and harassment/bullying and their success through response and adjudication.

Mr. Joseph Storch, Associate Counsel for the State University of New York (SUNY) has written on the issue of cyber bullying. He focused his comments on the prevention of and response to incidents of violence on campuses using the SUNY model as an example. Storch was also quite clear in his comments that bystander intervention training and anti-bullying programs should begin well before students reach college campuses.

To view the recorded video of the hearing and read the written testimonies, access the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) website at:

<http://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/campus-safety-improving-prevention-and-response-efforts>