

Senate Bill 374 – Student Safety Act

The Michigan Parent Teacher Association (Michigan PTA) wholly supports SB 374 – the Michigan Student Safety Act – that will facilitate implementation of the OK-2-SAY program.

The amount of violence we hear about in schools today is staggering and this violence is both perpetrated on and by children. Evidence shows that in over 80% of violent incidents in schools, someone other than the attacker knew of the attacker's plan yet did not report it. Why does this culture of silence persist? Fear of retaliation? The assumption that nobody will do anything anyway? Concern over being labeled a 'snitch'?

We have the opportunity in front of us to begin changing that culture. OK-2-SAY will empower children with a safe, confidential avenue to share information that has the potential to save lives. The program will be operational all day, every day, accepting tips across a wide range of media, which will promote immediate reporting and help alleviate second thoughts about reporting. The statewide scope of OK-2-SAY allows for swift action that can prevent tragedies rather than leaving us wishing something hadn't happened.

Parents and family members want to ensure their children – all children – are safe at home, at school and in the community. Michigan PTA supports and applauds Attorney General Schuette, Representative Potvin, Senator Emmons and others that have moved us this far toward implementation of OK-2-SAY. We urge this legislature to take immediate action to pass the Student Safety Act to ensure the program will be able to move forward.

If just one child's life is saved, and we believe it will be many more, the program will be a success. No parent, no sister or brother, no grandparent, no friend – not anyone – should be on the receiving end of that one phone call that will change their life in the worst possible way.

Delays in moving SB 374 have resulted in a missed opportunity to implement OK-2-SAY at the beginning of this school year. Perhaps the recent shooting of Sexton High School students, right here in Lansing, could have been prevented by a phone call, an e-mail or a text message. It is time to take action...before one more child is injured or lost to their family forever.