

Jacquelyn Andrews

Testimony

House Education and Labor Committee

July 7, 2009

My name is Jackie Andrews, and I am 16 years old. I am from Haddon Heights, New Jersey, and I am a student at The Lawrenceville School. I am here today to talk about my work against the national epidemic of bullying.

When it comes to bullying, it takes ONE VOICE.

It's not about the victim who needs a voice or the bully who the bully to find a brain, it's about the 99.9% who know that bullying is wrong, yet do nothing.

A victim is a victim because he can't stand up for himself. Bullies take the actions they do because they don't know what they are doing is wrong. What this world needs is to stop focusing only on the victim's effort to stand up for himself or the bully's effort to realize what he is doing is wrong and become nice—we have tried these approaches in the past and they too often have been ineffective. A future without bullying is dependent on the 99.9% of the people who can make a difference—the people who know that bullying is wrong, but who have thus far have done nothing to stop it. In my book, this 99.9 percent is as bad as the bully himself because the bully doesn't know better...they do.

We are experiencing an epidemic of bullying among the young people of our nation. Shocking numbers of young people report frequent and recurring instances of verbal and psychological abuse. Bullying is a problem that cuts across racial, economic, religious and other social categories, and results in the mounting tragedy of depression, substance abuse, suicide, and retaliatory violence. In recognition of this problem, at least 28 states have adopted a legal requirement that schools incorporate anti-bullying programs into their curricula. To date, these programs have largely failed to stem the tide of the bullying epidemic.

I have spent the last three years creating an anti-bullying program that focuses more on the 99.9% of the people who can make a difference in a bully and a victim's life: the bystanders. My program is based on painful personal experiences. I was a victim of bullying myself. I have experienced the pain and suffering caused by a bully from as early as 4th grade. In grade school, I used to be best friends with the school's bully. One day in 4th grade, my best friend was brutally picking on this girl who was slightly overweight. Disgusted by my friend's actions, I decided to stand up for the victim, which ultimately led me to be the victim myself. If just one person other person had stood behind me, the bully never would have prevailed. But no one did. Ironically, the victim I stood up for stopped being the target and soon became the new best friend of the bully, while I became the target. The bystanders, meanwhile, just watched.

The anti-bullying curriculum I have created is based on a three step program focusing

on grades 3-4, 5-6 and 7-8. While much bullying occurs in grades 5-8, I believe it is crucial that we reach students in the 3rd and 4th grade. The programs are designed for 30 hours per year. The lower grade curriculum includes requiring students to draw and write picture books about how to form alliances against bullies, creating and signing creeds, poster contests, and “buddy systems.” The higher grade curriculum includes requiring students to read and synopsise entries by bullied students on international websites and to create stories about how these students’ suffering began. For all three grade levels, my curriculum emphasizes how bystanders can make the right choice and become a part of the solution to the bullying crisis. This curriculum grew out of the message of my sister’s upcoming movie “Milo J High.” After I co-wrote some of the songs in the movie, I decided to take the next step and to develop my program, which hopefully will lead to major improvements in the way our schools teach about the epidemic of bullying.

Bystanders need to stand up to a bully and change another’s life forever. Each day, each one of us can be that person who takes a stand. Every day we have decisions to make. Yesterday one more person was bullied because one more person chose to do nothing. Today is the day we stand up. Tomorrow, one less child is a victim.

Thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to your questions.