# Taking Action with the RAC for the Safe Schools Improvement Act

**Why is the Safe Schools Improvement Act necessary?**

* Bullying is widespread and persistent:
  + 19% of K-12 students are bullied in school, accounting for more than 10 million students.
  + 68% of students who are bullied face repeated incidents over multiple days.
  + 13.4% of bullied students reported negative impacts on their physical health, accounting for more than 1.35 million youth.
* Bullying is often unreported. 56% of bullying incidents are never reported to an adult.
* Marginalized students face higher levels of bullying:
  + 83% of LGBTQ+ students reported being bullied or assaulted at school, with the majority never reporting.
  + 71% of Jewish parents reported their child experienced antisemitism at school.
  + 44% of teenagers with developmental disabilities experienced bullying.
  + 34% of Muslim students reported that bullying negatively impacted their physical or mental health.
* Only 23 states have adopted a law or implemented a regulation that requires similar bullying prevention policies at the local level, meaning that as many as 27.9 million K-12 students may attend schools without robust bullying prevention policies or even complaint procedures to address bullying.

**What would the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) do?**

* There is currently no federal requirement for local education agencies to establish bullying prevention policies.
* The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) would require that local education agencies (e.g., school districts) establish bullying prevention policies.
* SSIA does not prescribe a uniform federal policy but instead sets out minimum requirements that local bullying prevention policies must meet.
* SSIA would strengthen reporting and mitigation measures to address bullying in schools by shoring up state standards, improving adoption of evidence-based best practices, and providing school districts with the local flexibility needed to make school safer.
* SSIA builds on a strong evidence basis and applied practice in 23 states to ensure that school districts have the tools they need to mitigate and address bullying to ensure safer learning environments for their students. These steps will ensure that every child has the chance to learn and grow in an environment free from threats, harassment, and fear.

**What do our Jewish values say about safe schools and bullying prevention?**

* The Torah teaches in Genesis 1:27 that everyone is created *b'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God) and deserves dignity and respect.
* The Talmud teaches that “anyone who humiliates another in public, it is as though he were spilling blood.” (Bava Metzia 58b) We are commanded that we must not stand idly by the blood of our neighbor (Leviticus 19:16), meaning that as Jews we are obligated to prevent bullying.
* Rabbi Hillel taught that a person who is shamed (or timid) cannot learn (Pirkei Avot 2:5). We must then create schools where students feel confidence and belonging, not shame and timidity.

**Do my Members of Congress support the Safe Schools Improvement Act?**

Find out if your Representative supports the [Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 1810)](https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1810/cosponsors):

* If your Representative is a cosponsor, thank them for supporting the Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 1810), demonstrating their commitment to protecting students from bullying.
* If your Representative is NOT a cosponsor, ask them to demonstrate their commitment to protecting students from bullying by cosponsoring the Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 1810).

Find out if your Senators support the [Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 986)](https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/986/cosponsors):

* If your Senator is a cosponsor, thank them for supporting the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 986), demonstrating their commitment to protecting students from bullying.
* If your Senator is NOT a cosponsor, ask them to demonstrate their commitment to protecting students from bullying by cosponsoring the Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 986).

Please contact RAC Legislative Assistant [Mason Purdy](mailto:mpurdy@rac.org) for more information about the Safe Schools Improvement Act, how to connect with your elected officials, or the Reform Movement’s work on LGBTQ+ equality.