

(H. B. 782)

(No. 108)

(Approved May 26, 2006)

AN ACT

To add subsection (bb) to Section 6.03 of Act No. 149 of June 15, 1999, as amended, known as the Organic Act of the Department of Education, in order to impose on the Department of Education, in cooperation with the Office of the Women's Advocate, the duty to design and implement a curriculum that is directed toward promoting gender equality and preventing domestic violence.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Domestic violence is a complex social evil that affects all sectors of Puerto Rican society. It endangers the physical and emotional health of the victim and the victim's closest relatives. The news media constantly reports cases of domestic violence that range from verbal to physical aggression and even the loss of life.

Statistics show that in cases of domestic violence, women are the ones who suffer the most from the consequences. In order to address this situation, this Legislature approved Act No. 54 of August 15, 1989, as amended, known as the Domestic Abuse Prevention and Intervention Act. The purpose of said Act is to offer due protection to victims of domestic violence, and at the same time, to provide alternatives for the treatment of offenders.

Studies reveal that children suffer the consequences of domestic violence directly, and that once they reach adulthood, they will probably repeat the behavior patterns they saw during the phases of their development.

These are some of the effects of domestic violence on children and adolescents:

- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Physical and emotional symptoms related to stress
- Anxiety and fear for the safety of the mother and their own
- Hopelessness
- Shame
- Sense of guilt due to the situation
- Ambivalence or conflict of loyalties toward the parents
- Passive or aloof behavior in young girls
- Aggressive or violent behavior toward others in young boys
- Self-destructive behavior or ideas and suicide attempts
- Anti-social behavior and development of few friendships
- Premature sexual behavior
- Propensity toward the use of drugs and alcohol
- Difficulty in concentrating
- Low scholastic achievement
- Runaway from home at an early age
- Tendency toward dependence, even in tasks they could easily perform
- Tendency toward using manipulation as a means to resolve conflicts
- Premature pregnancies
- Delinquency
- Lack of self-control
- Problems regarding the need to eat and to sleep
- Nocturnal incontinence (bedwetting)
- Nightmares
- Frequent mood changes
- Learning from violent and oppressive couple relationship models

Our hope is to provide our children with all the opportunities for their development in a healthy environment, so that they may become good citizens in the future. In this manner, the principle included in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which states that, “The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity is achieved.”

With the approval of this bill, we take a step in the right direction toward the rescuing of our children and adolescents.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- A new subsection (bb) is hereby added to Section 6.03 of Act No. 149 of July 15, 1999, as amended, to read as follows:

“Section 6.03.- Academic Duties and Obligations of the Secretary

The Secretary, as academic director of the Puerto Rico Public Education System, shall:

(a) ...

(bb) Establish, in coordination with the Office of the Women’s Advocate, a teaching curriculum that is directed toward promoting gender equality and preventing domestic violence. He/she shall also have the duty to implement this curriculum through the regular academic offerings, or integrating it into academic programs and other educational modalities.”

Section 2.- Effectiveness

This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 108 (H.B. 782) of the 3rd Session of the 15th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to add subsection (bb) to Section 6.03 of Act No. 149 of June 15, 1999, as amended, known as the Organic Act of the Department of Education, in order to impose on the Department of Education, in cooperation with the Office of the Women's Advocate, the duty to design and implement a curriculum that is directed toward promoting gender equality and preventing domestic violence,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 17th of September of 2007.

Francisco J. Domenech
Director