

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1966

To amend title 18, United States Code, with respect to cyberbullying.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 2, 2009

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California (for herself, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. YARMUTH, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. BISHOP of New York, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HARE, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. CLAY, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. COURTNEY, and Mr. KIRK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To amend title 18, United States Code, with respect to cyberbullying.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Megan Meier
5 Cyberbullying Prevention Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Four out of five of United States children
2 aged 2 to 17 live in a home where either they or
3 their parents access the Internet.

4 (2) Youth who create Internet content and use
5 social networking sites are more likely to be targets
6 of cyberbullying.

7 (3) Electronic communications provide anonym-
8 ity to the perpetrator and the potential for wide-
9 spread public distribution, potentially making them
10 severely dangerous and cruel to youth.

11 (4) Online victimizations are associated with
12 emotional distress and other psychological problems,
13 including depression.

14 (5) Cyberbullying can cause psychological harm,
15 including depression; negatively impact academic
16 performance, safety, and the well-being of children
17 in school; force children to change schools; and in
18 some cases lead to extreme violent behavior, includ-
19 ing murder and suicide.

20 (6) Sixty percent of mental health professionals
21 who responded to the Survey of Internet Mental
22 Health Issues report having treated at least one pa-
23 tient with a problematic Internet experience in the
24 previous five years; 54 percent of these clients were
25 18 years of age or younger.

1 **SEC. 3. CYBERBULLYING.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 41 of title 18, United
3 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
4 lowing:

5 **“§ 881. Cyberbullying**

6 “(a) Whoever transmits in interstate or foreign com-
7 merce any communication, with the intent to coerce, in-
8 timidate, harass, or cause substantial emotional distress
9 to a person, using electronic means to support severe, re-
10 peated, and hostile behavior, shall be fined under this title
11 or imprisoned not more than two years, or both.

12 “(b) As used in this section—

13 “(1) the term ‘communication’ means the elec-
14 tronic transmission, between or among points speci-
15 fied by the user, of information of the user’s choos-
16 ing, without change in the form or content of the in-
17 formation as sent and received; and

18 “(2) the term ‘electronic means’ means any
19 equipment dependent on electrical power to access
20 an information service, including email, instant mes-
21 saging, blogs, websites, telephones, and text mes-
22 sages.”.

23 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
24 at the beginning of chapter 41 of title 18, United States

- 1 Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new
- 2 item:

“881. Cyberbullying.”.

