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**ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2079**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** House Community Safety, Justice, & Reentry (originally sponsored by Representatives Schmidt, Riccelli, Low, Christian, Klicker, Ormsby, McClintock, and Couture)

AN ACT Relating to improving school safety by extending and increasing penalties for interference by, or intimidation by threat of, force or violence at schools and athletic activities; adding a new section to chapter 28A.635 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that incidents of violence in elementary and secondary schools raise concerns about ensuring and promoting school safety. For learning to occur, schools must first be safe places for students and staff. The legislature recognizes that violent behavior tends to escalate if tolerated, thus it is the intent of the legislature to provide targeted and appropriate sanctions for the interference with school activities by force or violence before it rises to the level of substantial or grievous bodily harm.

(2) The legislature understands that extracurricular athletics provide valuable opportunities for students to develop social and personal skills that can be useful throughout their lives. These activities also benefit other students and spectators by building school spirit, unity, community support, and community identity. Extracurricular athletics would not be possible without the commitment of officials, judges, referees, and volunteers who work at the events for little or no financial gain. The legislature finds that the values engendered in interscholastic activities are being undermined by participants and spectators who do not respect the commitment of these officials. Increasingly, these people are expressing their dissatisfaction through inappropriate verbal abuse and behavior directed at the officials. The legislature recognizes that officials, such as judges and referees, and volunteers acting as officials, for extracurricular athletic activities of elementary and secondary school students are particularly vulnerable to inappropriate conduct because their attention is focused on the athletic activities. Thus, the legislature intends to provide additional support and protection for officials conducting interscholastic events.

(3) The legislature finds that violence against public and private students and staff is unacceptable. Thus, to promote a safe learning environment, the legislature intends to increase the penalty for those perpetrating violence against students and school staff.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.635 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Signage must be posted notifying the public of the offenses and possible penalties under RCW 28A.635.090 and 28A.635.100.

(2) The signage must be prominently displayed at any entrance to a public school gymnasium or auditorium and wherever other public notices are placed at public school athletic fields.

(3) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall develop a standard signage form notifying the public of the offenses and possible penalties under RCW 28A.635.090 and 28A.635.100.

(4) As used in this section, "public school" has the same meaning as in RCW 28A.150.010.

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