

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 5272

As Passed House - Amended:

March 3, 2026

Title: An act relating to improving school safety by extending penalties for interference by, or intimidation by threat of, force or violence at schools and extracurricular activities and requiring schools to notify the public of such penalties.

Brief Description: Improving school safety by extending penalties for interference by, or intimidation by threat of, force or violence at schools and extracurricular activities and requiring schools to notify the public of such penalties.

Sponsors: Senators Lovick, Krishnadasan and Saldaña.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Safety: 2/18/26, 2/19/26 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/3/26, 92-2.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill (As Amended by House)

- Expands the school-related crimes of Interference by Force or Violence and Intimidation by Threat of Force or Violence.
- Requires a person, other than a student, convicted of Interference by Force or Violence to be excluded from entering the school or attending the extracurricular athletic activity where the crime was committed for a specified period.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Goodman, Chair;

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Graham, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Burnett, Davis, Farivar, Fosse and Obras.

Staff: Lena Langer (786-7192).

Background:

Classification of Crimes.

Crimes are classified as misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors, or class A, B, or C felonies. While there are exceptions, the classification of a crime generally determines the maximum term of confinement and fine for an offense. For each classification, the maximum terms of confinement and maximum fines are as follows:

Classification	Maximum Confinement	Maximum Fine
Misdemeanor	90 Days	\$1,000
Gross Misdemeanor	364 Days	\$5,000
Class C Felony	5 Years	\$10,000
Class B Felony	10 Years	\$20,000
Class A Felony	Life	\$50,000

Interference by, or Intimidation by Threat of, Force or Violence.

It is a gross misdemeanor for a person to interfere by force or violence with a teacher, administrator, classified employee, contract employee, or student who is in the peaceful discharge or conduct of his or her duties or studies. The penalty for Interference by Force or Violence is a fine of up to \$500, confinement for not more than six months, or both a fine and confinement.

A student who interferes by force or violence with a teacher, administrator, classified employee, contract employee, or student is subject to immediate suspension or expulsion.

It is a gross misdemeanor for a person to intimidate by threat of force or violence a teacher, administrator, classified employee, or student who is in the peaceful discharge or conduct of his or her duties or studies. The penalty for Intimidation by Threat of Force or Violence is a fine of up to \$500, confinement for not more than six months, or both a fine and confinement.

Emergency Removal of Students.

Emergency removals of students must end or be converted to another form of corrective action within 10 school days from the date of the emergency removal from school. The rules of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction provide that a student may be removed from their school placement when the school district has sufficient cause to believe that the student's presence poses either: (1) an immediate and continuing danger to

other students or school personnel; or (2) an immediate and continuing threat of material and substantial disruption of the educational process. In many state laws related to student discipline, the term "emergency expulsion" has been replaced with "emergency removal."

Summary of Amended Bill:

The offenses of Interference by Force or Violence and Intimidation by Threat of Force or Violence are expanded to include the interference by force or violence with, or intimidation by threat of force or violence of, an employee or contractor of a public or private elementary or secondary school, an elementary or secondary student, or an official or volunteer acting as an official for extracurricular athletic activities of elementary or secondary students, while that person is in the peaceful discharge or conduct of his or her duties or studies.

A person, other than a student, convicted of Interference by Force or Violence must be excluded from entering the school where the offense was committed, or from attending the extracurricular athletic activities in which the offense was committed, for no less than 12 months and no more than 18 months.

A public school student's actions that constitute the offense of Interference by Force or Violence are grounds for the student's emergency removal. If such conduct occurs during extracurricular athletic activities, the student may be excluded from participating in or attending that activity. Language providing that a student who interferes by force or violence with a teacher, administrator, classified employee, contract employee, or student is subject to immediate suspension or expulsion is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Verbal abuse against sports officials has been increasing and something needs to be done to protect sports officials. Over 50 percent of these officials have felt unsafe on the job; this contributes to the current shortage of officials in schools. In addition to being harassed, sports referees have been physically assaulted. There has been a decline in sportsmanship. Incidents against sports officials continue to happen at an alarming rate. March 3 was proclaimed National Sportsmanship Day, which is meant to recognize the importance of character, responsibility, and respectful conduct in sports at all levels of play. This bill falls in line with that commitment to sportsmanship. Youth sports leagues struggle to find officials because of the harassment officials face. The bill sends a clear

message that abuse is never a part of the game. There needs to be more protection for the people who make games possible so kids can keep playing in safe, respectful environments. A previous version of this bill passed the House of Representatives unanimously in 2024. The bill is necessary to keep sportsmanship in sports and will improve community and school safety. Everyone needs to work together, educate, and be role models for kids involved in sports. Referees deserve to be safe and respected.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator John Lovick, prime sponsor; Albert Merkel, Spokane Valley city council member, on own behalf; Robert West; Linda Thompson, Washington Association for Substance misuse and Violence Prevention (WASAVP); and Senator Keith Wagoner.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.