

# SUPPORT BULLYING AWARENESS

## Bi-Partisan Letter to MPAA

Dear Colleague:

Over 13 million American youths will be bullied over the course of this year alone, making it the most common form of violence experienced by young people in our nation. We cannot hope to control this epidemic and make our neighborhoods safer for our youth without discussing tough issues publicly and bringing them to the forefront of the consciousness of the American public.

The new documentary film ***Bully***, directed by Sundance and Emmy-award winning filmmaker Lee Hirsh, offers an unprecedented look into the lives of youth being bullied and harassed. This acclaimed documentary is scheduled to be released on March 30th, 2012 and has been assigned a rating of R from the Motion Picture Association of America. I believe an R-rating excludes the very audience for whom this film is most important, and ask you to join us in calling upon the MPAA to reconsider their rating and allow access to those who need to see this film most – today's youth and our future leaders.

Currently, a Change.org petition calling upon the MPAA to reconsider and change the R-rating to PG-13 being circulated by Michigan high school junior Katy Butler has attracted over 267,000 signatures to date. In support of this sentiment, we believe that this film should be made available to the audiences which it will most benefit.

The letter has been making news all across the country this week.

Coverage of the letter has been featured in the L.A. Times (CA), The Lexington Herald Leader (KY), The Charlotte Observer (NC), The Republic (IN), The Bellingham Herald (WA), The Bradenton Herald (FLA), The Merced Sun-Star (CA), The Kansas City Star (MO), The Sun Herald (MI), The Macon Telegraph (GA), The Centre Daily Times (PA), The Modesto Bee (CA), The Idaho Statesman (ID), The Belleville News Democrat (IL), The Miami Herald (FLA), The South Bend Tribune (IN), The Bay Citizen (CA), The Dallas Morning News (TX), The Times Picayune (LA) and The Fresno Bee (CA).

You can find the main articles here:

<http://bit.ly/y9Mixx>

<http://lat.ms/yHgEW1>

<http://bit.ly/y9c0vn>

**Please sign on to this letter urging the Motion Picture Association of America to reconsider. To co-sign or for more information, please contact Fayzan Gowani in Rep. Honda's office at 5-2631 or [fayzan.gowani@mail.house.gov](mailto:fayzan.gowani@mail.house.gov) by COB on Thursday, March 15th, 2012.**

Sincerely,

Mike Honda  
Member of Congress

March \_\_, 2012

Senator Chris Dodd  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Motion Picture Association of America  
1600 Eye St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Senator Dodd:

We are writing to express our sincere disappointment in the Motion Picture Association of America's decision to issue an R-rating for the soon-to-be-released documentary *Bully*. This important project shows the real life anguish of many teenagers in this country who are tormented, harassed, and bullied by their peers. This truth should be shared with as wide an audience as is appropriate and possible. We believe an R-rating excludes the very audience for whom this film is desperately important.

The current Change.org petition being circulated by Michigan high school junior Katy Butler has attracted over 267,000 signatures to date calling upon the MPAA to reconsider and change the R-rating to PG-13. Creating impediments for millions of teenagers from seeing a movie that could change – and in some cases, save – their lives, seems unreasonable to us. In support of this sentiment, and on behalf of the youth and families who suffer the direct and indirect effects of bullying, we believe that this film should be made available to the audiences to which this is most pertinent, present and urgent.

The language in the film is a reflection of reality in our schools, on our buses, and online – something these kids experience every single day. It's not sensationalized "adult content" as your rating suggests and is oftentimes an active part of bullying itself. This depiction is honest, and although striking at times, we should not censor reality. The educational benefit of this documentary, possibly life-saving, appears to clearly outweigh the utterances of profanity.

We need only remember the story of Ty Field, an 11 year old who took his own life after overwhelming harassment at school, to know that younger audiences need to be exposed to the message behind this film. In short, it is never too early to teach our children the golden rule, empathy, and the repercussions of bullying behavior.

Research shows more than 13 million kids will be bullied over the course of this year alone, and countless more are bystanders in these tragic situations. Over 160,000 children miss school every day due to fear of attack or intimidation by other students, proving that our school environments have room to be more conducive for dialogue, knowledge and an exchange of our stories. We cannot hope to control this epidemic without widespread, mainstream educational efforts. This film is an important contribution to this cause.

We commend the Weinstein Company, Writer Lee Hirsch, and Executive Director Patricia Finneran for tackling this tough issue in documentary form. We are moved by the stories in the film, commend these brave people for their honesty and sincerely hope this film can be viewed by as broad of an

audience as possible. With this in mind, we ask you to reconsider the R-rating in the context of its educational importance and life-changing potential.

Sincerely,

Mike Honda  
Member of Congress