

U.S. House Passes Congressman Rothman's Bill, Phylicia's Law

Requires Written Safety Plans for Off-Campus School Trips to Keep Our Students Safe

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Steve Rothman's (D-NJ) bill, Phylicia's Law passed the U.S. House 319 to 60. Phylicia's Law amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and will require school districts to develop a safety policy for overnight school trips.

"Every child's life is precious so when there are reasonable steps that we can take to better protect our young people, then I believe we should take them," said Rothman. "Having parents judge the sufficiency of school safety and security plans before giving their consent to approve any off-campus school trip for their child is highly appropriate and clearly necessary. This law also will help ensure that all involved — the schools, the chaperones, the students, and parents — know what their individual roles and responsibilities are on a trip and what will happen should tragedy strike."

Phylicia Moore was an 18 year-old high school student, from Teaneck, New Jersey who died in April 2007 while on a school-sponsored trip to Ghana.

Phylicia's Law as written still gives individual schools the leeway to determine their own off-campus plans and procedures, which parents will be able to review before deciding whether to send their children on a trip. School districts, who know their own schools and students best, will have full discretion to set the specific requirements in a safety plan as they see fit. Parents will see the policies before approving a trip and can then determine whether they feel that it is safe for their child to go.

"To be honest, we all know and accept that Phylicia's loss is irreconcilable, but Doug and I feel that Phylicia's Law will prevent tragedies like ours from occurring to other families in the future," said Lola Moore in a written statement. "We are encouraged by the U.S. House's passage of this bill, Phylicia's Law, so that all students will be protected and safe on school trips and that Phylicia's death would not be utterly wasted."

Federal law currently requires public schools to have safety plans and security procedures in place for the physical campus of the school. However, there are no such requirements when schools take students off-campus on field trips. Phylicia's Law addresses this deficiency.

The National Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), the National Education Association (NEA) and the National Association of School Boards have also endorsed Phylicia's Law.

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