



**Working Group on Student Protections from  
Harassment and Discrimination in Schools  
Working Group on Compulsory Attendance  
September 27, 2023 3:45 – 4:30 p.m.**

Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting  
Call In: 1-802-828-7667  
Conference ID: 5556 915 990#

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

**Compulsory Attendance Working Group (WG) Members Present:**

**V Pearson**, Outright VT, Director of Organizing; **Amanda Garces**, Vermont Human Rights Commission (HRC), Director of Policy, Education and Outreach; and **Heather Bouchey**, AOE, Interim Secretary of Education.

**AOE:** Maureen Gaidys

**Members of the public/others:** Laura Wayne

**Call to Order/Introductions Roll Call/Amendments to Agenda**

The meeting was called to order at 3:48 p.m. There was discussion on the structure of this group and the application of Open Meeting Law. Interim Secretary Bouchey provided background. She, Garces, and V are part of a larger working group (Working Group on Student Protections from Harassment and Discrimination in Schools) created by the legislature, who is taking a deep dive into existing regulation and process on harassment and discrimination. There is a concern for all students who are not being served well in the existing paradigm (complaints, investigations, etc.). This group has been very concerned about the impact on students and different vulnerabilities - marginalized students, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, students on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), English language learners (ELL) and others. Garces added that this group is looking specifically at bullying, harassment and hazing in relation to compulsory attendance and what that means for parents and students and the term “severe and pervasive.”

Laura Wayne offered comment to the Working Group.

V offered some [resources](#) from Outright Vermont.

There was discussion on a “reasonable” excuse for not attending school, disconnect between intent of law and implementation thereof, parents needing a guide for how to proceed with attendance issues, and that bullies are also kids in need.

Garces said she didn’t have enough time for outreach for this meeting and wondered if there could be another listening session, with time to hear more voices. There was discussion on the policy under development, looking at statute, using a lens other than a liability lens in developing policy, looking at all space connected to this work, disseminating information to

parents, developing a roadmap for navigation of these issues, presence of adults in bullying situations, need for group-level interventions, right-sized response vs. individualized response, school refusal and its link with anxiety, needs to be treated as the health problem that it is, educational access, holding schools accountable, and changing statute so that VTVLC is allowable in a broader sense.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 4:51 p.m.

Meeting Minutes recorded by: Maureen Gaidys.