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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Senate of Pennsylvania

FROM: Andy Hoover, Legislative Director

DATE: May 6, 2009

RE: OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 56

Senate Bill 56, which was recently reported out of the Senate Education Committee, mandates school administrators to call their local police in certain situations. SB 56 leaves school administrators with no discretion to consider individual circumstances. The bill will increase student contact with law enforcement and mix more kids into the criminal justice system. Pennsylvania's children deserve better than this. The American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania opposes SB 56, and on behalf of the 15,000 members of the ACLU of PA, I urge you to vote "no" on the bill.

The ACLU of PA and our allies do not believe that SB 56 is inherently flawed. We recognize that the most serious incidents- homicide, sexual assault, weapons, drugs, assault that requires outside medical attention- should be reported to the police. But as it is currently written, SB 56 requires typical playground fights to be reported to the police. A kindergarten student who inappropriately exposes him- or herself could be slapped with handcuffs and charged with indecent exposure. If you have memories of your childhood, you can probably recall incidents like these occurring among your classmates. But in previous generations, these incidents landed a student in the principal's office, not before a judge.

Attached you will find a fact sheet that further outlines our opposition to this legislation. Please vote "no" on SB 56.