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**EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE**

**Congressman George Miller, Chairman**

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Thursday, June 24, 2010  
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**Chairwoman McCarthy Statement at Subcommittee Hearing  
on “Ensuring Student Cyber Safety”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities, for a subcommittee hearing on “Ensuring Student Cyber Safety”*

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I'd like to welcome our witnesses to this hearing on ensuring student cyber safety.

As a nurse for over 30 years, I have seen firsthand the damage and loss families can experience from bullying.

The emerging world of cyber bullying is taking a toll on our students in ways we didn't imagine just a few years ago.

Traditional acts of bullying extend beyond the halls of our school buildings and have found a new home on the internet.

Through this hearing we will explore areas of concern related to cyber bullying and how it is intertwined with and compounded by traditional forms of bullying.

While the overwhelming number of students are safe, it is a parent's worst nightmare to learn their child has become the victim of a crime or other incident.

Acts of bullying can quickly escalate into cyber bullying which, as we know is far reaching and can lead to outbreaks of violence.

According to a February 2010 PEW report, 73% of wired American teens now use social networking websites, a significant increase from previous surveys.

Another recent PEW report found that daily text messaging among American teens has shot up in the past year and a half, from 38% in February of 2008 to 54% in September 2009.

And it's not just frequency – teens are sending enormous quantities of text messages a day.

Half of teens send 50 or more text messages a day, and one in three send more than one hundred texts a day.

As a parent, knowing your child has been the victim of any form of bullying can be heartbreaking, so too can learning that your child is a bully.

These days, cyber bullying can have dire consequences.

The emotional and physical impacts of cyber bullying have become more severe than ever and we need to be proactive in dealing with this serious problem.

Students cannot learn and teachers cannot teach in environments that are unsafe and frightening.

Students ought to be able to focus on learning and gaining the tools they need to succeed in life, not worrying about physical or emotional violence.

Another theme that I think is important and that you will hear running through this hearing is that effective cyber safety efforts must include coordination between all interested parties, especially the students.

The students know what's happening to them and to their peers, and often before adults do.

They are critical partners in any cyber safety efforts and I look forward to hearing ideas on this.

Student cyber safety is necessary for a successful academic career.

We cannot legislate morality, nor insist on kindness, and we cannot criminalize meanness.

Awareness and education hold the key to any solution.

As the Committee continues our work on reauthorizing ESEA, we must give serious consideration to the testimony we have heard today and determine how Congress can best move forward to prevent further tragedies.

Thank you all for being here and I look forward to your testimony.

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