

# Michigan Passes Law Against Cyberbullying

written by GEG | January 16, 2019



Michigan: Cyberbullying is now a misdemeanor punishable by 93 days in jail and a \$500 fine. A “pattern of repeated harassment” is a felony punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Cyberbullying that is found to cause a victim’s death is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. Cyberbullying is defined as posting a message that is intended to place a person in fear of bodily harm or death and expresses an intent to commit violence against the person. Some critics have argued that the definitions of cyberbullying are not as clear cut as they may sound and that clever attorneys could interpret them in such a way as to violate the First Amendment or to imprison someone for merely hurting others’ feelings. -GEG

We’ve got bad news for you, *Metro Times* trolls: Cyberbullying is now a crime in Michigan.

On Thursday, Gov. Rick Snyder signed into law a bill sponsored by Rep. Pete Lucido, R-Shelby Township that formally defines cyberbullying as a misdemeanor. Public Act 457 of 2018 will take effect in March.

The law states cyberbullying is a crime punishable by 93 days in jail and a \$500 fine. A “pattern of repeated harassment” is a felony punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Meanwhile, cyberbullying that is found to cause a victim’s death is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

According to Lucido’s bill, “cyberbullying” is defined by “posting a message or statement in a public media forum about any other person” if both “the message or statement is intended to place a person in fear of bodily harm or death and expresses an intent to commit violence against the person” and “the message or statement is posted with the intent to communicate a threat or with knowledge that it will be viewed as a

threat.”

A “pattern of harassing or intimidating behavior” means a series of two or more separate noncontinuous acts of harassing or intimidating behavior. And a “public media forum” refers to “the internet or any other medium designed or intended to be used to convey information to other individuals, regardless of whether a membership or password is required to view the information.”

In 2015, [a 13-year-old Michigan girl](#) committed suicide after being bullied and taunted by classmates on Facebook. At the time, police said the social media posts did not indicate criminal wrongdoing.

“Cyberbullying can cause just as much trauma as traditional bullying so it’s important that it be considered a crime,” Snyder said in a statement. “With this bill, we are sending a message that bullying of any kind is not tolerated in Michigan.”

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