



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Tedisco

## A Permanent Vacation from Bullying at School

JAMES TEDISCO June 9, 2025

| ISSUE: **SCHOOL SAFETY, SCHOOL BULLYING, SCHOOL BUS CAMERA SAFETY, EDUCATION; NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT; SCHOOL DISTRICTS, PTA**



Jacobe Taras

*By Senator Jim Tedisco*

It's June and that means school's out for summer.

Summer vacation has long been a welcome respite for kids to enjoy the outdoors, go to summer camp and spend cherished free time with family and friends.

But for too many children, summer vacation symbolizes a desperately needed respite and oasis or at least a partial reprieve from enduring the awful physical and emotional abuse of being relentlessly bullied at school.

It's heartbreaking that any child should face such anguish from going to school each day due to bullying.

As any adult can attest, bullying has existed within the bricks and mortar of our schools for years.

It used to be that once a child left school grounds and got off the bus, they were largely free from the unforgiving taunts and persistent physical abuse caused by bullies.

The prevalence of social media and smart phones have compounded the problem by giving bullies a weapon of mass destruction to harass and torment their victims exponentially 24-7.

Thanks to the internet and social media apps like TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube, there is no escape and no sanctuary from the emotional trauma inflicted by bullies.

Besides the physical abuse, every child's step or misstep, can now be videoed, photographed and instantly messaged on social media for the whole world to see and potentially ridicule.

And certainly, when the pain gets so great, they not only hurt themselves but can strike out against the bullies in violent ways.

Unfortunately, due to a loophole in state law, many parents are not being kept informed about incidents of bullying taking place in the institutions we trust to educate and look after the safety and well-being of our children each day.

*In 2012, the Dignity for All Students Act became law* as a means to address bullying in the classroom. Although schools are required to report incidents to the state Education Department, the Dignity for All Students Act does not require schools to alert parents when their child has been bullied or is believed to be the perpetrator of bullying. The law currently leaves it up to each school district to develop its own policy for parental notification.

This gap in state law has become fatal.

In April 2015, 13-year-old Jacobe Taras of Moreau, here in Saratoga County, tragically took his own life as a result of bullying. Jacobe's parents, Christine and Richard Taras, were not notified by Jacobe's school of the extent of bullying he faced.

This is not an isolated incident. There are many heartbreaking stories of young people injuring themselves or worse yet taking or attempting to take their own lives because of bullying.

That's why *I am sponsoring legislation, "Jacobese's Law,"* named in Jacobe Taras's memory to require that schools notify parents when a child is being threatened by a bully. **"Jacobese's Law" (Senate bill S.16)** requires that school employees charged with receiving reports of harassment, bullying or discrimination contact the parents or guardians of the students involved – both the bullies and the victims -- in an incident of bullying or harassment.

Bullying is defined based on what's listed in the Dignity for All Students Act under Article 2 of the state's Education Law and it outlines what incidences schools are currently required to report to the Education Department.

"Jacobese's Law" is a non-partisan bill, with several Democratic sponsors which twice passed the Senate when I was in the Majority. Assemblywoman Mary Beth Walsh is sponsoring the bill in the Assembly.

I also am *sponsoring legislation, Senate Bill S.1958, to enable parents to view interior school bus camera video* when a report of bullying has been made. This measure is sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Matt Simpson.

Schools should make parents aware of threats of violence to their children so that a parent or guardian can take action they deem appropriate and have input on decisions of how best to protect their child's safety and emotional well-being.

Our educational system continues to ask and urge parents to be more involved in their children's education through the PTA, parent teacher interaction, providing input on their child's curriculum, and volunteering at our schools, yet we don't require schools to notify them of incidents of emotional and physical bullying. That just doesn't make sense.

If the statistics and incidences of bullying are important enough to report to the administrators at State Ed, then they are important enough to make parents aware of to intervene to develop a plan of action and potentially help avert a tragedy.

My heart continues to go out to the Taras family and all the families that have faced this devastating tragedy related to bullying. I can only hope that through "Jacobe's Law" we can bring about a positive change that can involve parents in helping to stop bullying and save lives.

As I've asked many times to parents, education officials and my colleagues, "if your child was bullied in school, wouldn't you want to know?"

Not a single person has ever said, "no, I'd rather not know."

I trust parents to inform and empower them so they can make the best decisions to protect their children.

As kids spend the next two months on summer vacation, it's time we give them a permanent vacation from unchecked school bullying.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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## 2025-S16

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Enacts [Jacobe's Law](#)

December 16, 2024

In Senate Committee [Education](#)

Sponsored by [James Tedisco](#)

## 2025-S1958

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Provides for the viewing of footage captured by an interior school bus camera in certain circumstances

January 14, 2025

In Senate Committee **Education**

Sponsored by **James Tedisco**

NAY