



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

Senator Nozzolio Announces Legislative Measures to Stop Bullying in New York State

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO May 5, 2010

In response to recent news stories highlighting the increase in incidents of bullying and cyber-bullying, State Senator Mike Nozzolio has sponsored legislation to give New York schools the tools needed to crack down on bullying and to protect our children. In addition, Senator Nozzolio has drafted and introduced legislation to make cyber-bullying illegal by creating the crime of harassment by electronic mail or computer network.

“Bullying is a pervasive problem throughout our nation’s schools and the faceless crime of harassment over the internet is the newest and fastest growing form of bullying,” said Senator Nozzolio. “Cyber-bullying often involves vicious and anonymous taunts on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. The bullying that often begins in school can carry over after a student goes home and have lasting and devastating effects on the child. This legislation would give law enforcement and the network providers, who actually carry these messages, with the authority they need to stop this serious crime.”

The United States Department of Justice reports that cyber-bullying is at an all time high. Forty-three percent of teenagers reported being victims of cyber-bullying. Statistics show that 9 out of 10 or 92% of these students have been bullied and most know their perpetrator or perpetrators. Only 10 percent of these individuals told their parents.

Senator Nozzolio’s legislation (S.2397) would make internet harassment a Class E felony. As a strong and steadfast proponent for harsher penalties for the crime of cyber-bullying, Senator Nozzolio has introduced this legislation in the State Senate every year since he drafted the bill in 2006.

Senator Nozzolio is also supporting three additional legislative measures, (S. 1253-A, S. 7158 and S. 298) to address the growing crime of cyber-bullying that would:

- Require school districts to include instruction on ways to discouraging acts of bullying and cyber-bullying within their required classroom study in civility, citizenship, and character education;

- Define bullying and cyber-bullying and add these acts to the list of incidents for which disciplinary measures must be taken pursuant to the school district's code of conduct;
- Require all school employees to report incidents of bullying and cyber-bullying;
- Create the crime of Aggravated Harassment of Teachers and School Personnel;
- Establish a state hotline for individuals to report instances of bullying, cyber-bullying and hazing;
- Elevate the penalties associated with the crimes of hazing, particularly in cases where a person is seriously injured or dies as a result of the bullying.

"New York is one of only seven states that do not have specific laws to target and prevent school bullying," said Senator Nozzolio. "We must act now to make our schools safe and to help the thousands of students who are needlessly suffering because they can't escape this growing crime and abuse," Senator Nozzolio concluded.

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