



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senate Passes Anti-Bullying Legislation

JACK M. MARTINS June 2, 2011

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION**

In recent years, incidents of teen suicide have brought attention to the issue of bullying. Take the case of Ryan Patrick Halligan. On October 7, 2003, John and Kelly Halligan of Vermont would realize the horror that their son Ryan Patrick committed suicide. It was later revealed that Ryan was bullied and humiliated at school and on-line.

Unfortunately, there are other cases like Ryan's. In some cases, bullying can lead to depression and a loss of self-esteem during those critical adolescent years. In order to put an end to bullying in schools across New York State, the Senate voted to eradicate bullying on school grounds.

Senator Jack M. Martins and his colleagues in the Senate co-sponsored a bill that is designed to create greater awareness of bullying on school grounds so that incidents will not go unnoticed. The bill (S.4921) requires any school employee who has reasonable cause to suspect a student has been a victim of bullying to report the incident to the principal. The bill also amends the Education Law to add bullying to the list of incidents for which disciplinary measures must be taken pursuant to a school district's code of conduct.

Furthermore, the bill amends the Education Law to require school districts to create policies and guidelines to encourage awareness and to prohibit acts of bullying. In addition, the

Commissioner of Education is required to prescribe regulations that require training in the identification and mitigation of bullying as a component of obtaining a teaching certificate or license valid for service as a classroom teacher, school administrator or supervisor or superintendent of schools.

“Schools are the place where our students should feel the most safe. Our young people need our schools to be places where students can learn and participate in extra-curricular activities, where they will learn social skills in addition to their academics. The education experience should be about boosting an individual’s self-esteem. Bullying harms it and it won’t be tolerated,” said Senator Martins. “This bill creates additional awareness going forward so we can work toward eradicating bullying.”

Bullying refers to written, oral or electronic expression as well as a physical act or gesture.

In a study funded by the United States Department of Justice, the National Crime Prevention Council reports that cyber-bullying is at an all-time high. Forty-three percent of teenagers reported being victims of cyber-bullying. The vast majority of teens knew their bully, however, only 10 percent of those cyber-bullying victims told their parents or other adults.

Statistics show that efforts are working in states where bullying prevention is taught in schools. According to the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, bullying can be reduced by up to 50 percent when there is a school-wide commitment to preventative and educational programs focused on bullying.

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.