



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Martin J. Golden

Senate Passes Anti-Bullying Legislation

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Includes Protections Against Cyber-Bullying and Helps Empower Schools To Intervene

The New York State Senate yesterday passed comprehensive anti-bullying legislation to help put an end to this destructive activity that often interferes with a student's education and emotional well-being. The bill (S.4921), sponsored by Senator Golden (R-C, Brooklyn), would help prevent cyber-bullying as well as conventional bullying on school grounds to create safer learning environments for children.

"Bullying knows no time or age limit but the legislation we passed today will make a difference in the negative effects it has on our children. The defining of cyber bullying is a big step in making this new phenomenon less powerful." stated Senator Golden.

Cyber-bullying often involves vicious anonymous taunts on social networking sites such as Facebook. Unrelenting and egregious incidents of cyber-bullying and conventional bullying have taken place throughout New York State and among

diverse age groups.

The Senate passed the “Law To Encourage the Acceptance of All Differences” (LEAD) to encompass cyber-bullying and further protect all students, regardless of the motivation for acts of bullying. LEAD further defines bullying as: the severe and repeated use by one or more students or school employees of a written, verbal or electronic form, or a physical act or gesture directed at a student that caused physical injury, emotional harm or damage to a student's property; placed the student in a reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself; creating a hostile environment at school; substantially disrupting the educational process or the orderly operation of a school.

The anti-bullying legislation would give New York schools the tools to help reduce bullying by requiring school employees to report incidents of bullying to principals and superintendents and adds bullying to the list of incidents for which a student can be disciplined. LEAD requires school districts to create policies and guidelines to encourage awareness of and to prohibit acts of bullying, and would increase education about bullying prevention for teachers and students.

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.