



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Proposed New Law Helps Schools Crack Down on Cyberbullying

PATTY RITCHIE June 18, 2012

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Would Require School Officials to Respond to Complaints; Receive Training on How to Identify and Stop Bullying

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced Senate approval of a bill that would help to crackdown on cyberbullying at schools across the state. The bill was drafted in consultation with Governor Cuomo and the Assembly, and is expected to become law.

“Bullying—especially cyberbullying—is something that is becoming more and more prevalent in our schools,” said Senator Ritchie. “I’ve heard from many concerned education officials, parents, and even students about how something needs to be done to put a stop to it.”

“This legislation will help educators detect warning signs related to bullying and hopefully stop it before it starts, create a more peaceful environment in the classroom and help ensure that education remains the top priority in our schools.”

The measure, S.7740, also known as the “Law to Encourage the Acceptance of All Differences,” or “LEAD,” was cosponsored by Senator Ritchie. It does not make “bullying” a separate crime, but sets in place guidelines for education, investigation and enforcement to combat the problem in schools and in the

community.

It was prompted by an increase in cyberbullying, believed to be linked to the tragic suicides of young people in New York State and across the country.

A recent survey showed that cyberbullying is at an all-time high—with 43 percent of teenagers reporting being victims of cyberbullying. In 2009, more than 7 million U.S. students ages 12-18, representing 28 percent of all students in that age range, were bullied at school. More than 1.5 million students—6 percent—were cyberbullied on or off school property.

A 2011 survey of New York State high school students revealed that during the previous year, nearly 18 percent of students had been bullied on school property, while 16 percent had been cyberbullied through e-mail chat room, instant messaging, websites, texting or other electronic means.

The bill, which is expected to be passed by the Assembly, defines and prohibits the bullying of students and others on school property; both conventional and cyberbullying. It also lays out provisions to combat the growing epidemic, including:

- Adding bullying to the list of incidents for which disciplinary measures must be taken
- Requiring school employees to report incidents of bullying
- Requiring school districts to create policies and guidelines to encourage awareness of and to prohibit acts of bullying
- Giving the Commissioner of Education the authority to set out regulations which would require certain school employees to be trained in how to identify and stop bullying

In addition to supporting this legislation, Senator Ritchie has done her part to combat the growing problem of bullying in New York State.

Earlier this month, Senator Ritchie met with Deputy Joe Murtha; School Resource Officer at Indian River Central School, Indian River High School Principal Troy Decker, Jefferson County District Attorney Cindy Intschert and Assistant District Attorney Rodney Kyle, Senator Ritchie to strategize ways to cut down on bullying in our region.

“I’ve seen firsthand how cyberbullying affects young adults and children, and anything we can do to teach them that there are consequences to their actions is a step in the right direction,” said Deputy Joe Murtha.

“This legislation is a good start to teaching children that bullying is not only hurtful, it’s unacceptable.”

“Cyberbullying is a problem that cannot be remedied by any single entity. Parents, schools, law enforcement, and all people in the public and private sector need to partner to promote the ideas of civility, citizenship and character, both face to face and online,” said Indian River High School Principal Troy Decker.

“These efforts will hopefully help to avoid some tragedy that happens as a result of cyber bullying.”

In February, Senator Ritchie [hosted an online Q-and-A with Miss New York](#), Kaitlin Monte, fielding questions from constituents about the growing problem of schoolyard bullying.

A fact sheet on the cyberbullying law can be found by [clicking here](#).