



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Announces Action to Prevent Bullying, Cyberbullying

Timothy M. Kennedy

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State Legislature approves comprehensive bill to prevent growing problem of online harassment.

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Timothy M. Kennedy, D-58th District, announced legislative action to protect children from bullying and cyberbullying across New York State. The State Legislature approved legislation to ensure young people have access to safe learning environments at school, in their neighborhoods and online.

“For most of us, bullying was something we may have had to endure at the playground or in school. Those days, the bullies could be escaped once we returned home. But today, technologies like social media and cell phones have made bullying

far more pervasive and far-reaching,” said Senator Kennedy. “State law needs to catch up with technology. We need to modernize the system, and we must take action to combat cyberbullying. The comprehensive legislation we pushed through the State Capitol will ensure our children feel safe at school, in our neighborhoods and online.”

A nationwide study conducted in 2009 found more than seven million American students ages 12-18 – or 28 percent of students – were bullied at school, while more than 1.5 million students – or six percent – were cyberbullied. In a more recent New York State survey from 2011, 16 percent of students – and 21 percent of female students – reported that they had experienced cyberbullying.

The legislation will help improve students’ safety by requiring school districts to institute procedures to respond to cyberbullying, harassment, bullying and discrimination. Among other components, the new procedures will assign a school official to take the lead role in receiving and investigating instances of bullying. Each school will also set guidelines to ensure prompt reporting and full investigation.

The new program will ensure action is taken to stop persistent bullies and prevent recurrences. Schools will also be armed with new bullying prevention strategies and will be asked to coordinate with law enforcement when appropriate and necessary. The school district will also notify the entire school community once it has established its formal policies.

The State Education Commissioner will devise and distribute recommendations to assist school districts in developing their protocols. The legislation also sets new training requirements for current and new school employees.

“For too long, the laws on the books had not been updated to reflect the surge in the prevalence of electronic communications,” Senator Kennedy added. “Inaction on this issue has handcuffed school districts and law enforcement from preventing instances of cyberbullying and bullying. This legislation will significantly improve student safety and help put a stop to violence. We will continue to collaborate with educators, parents and students to improve practices for preventing bullying before it starts.”

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 58th District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, Eden, Hamburg and West Seneca,

the city of Lackawanna and the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.