



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Senate Approves Proposal Co-Sponsored by Addabbo to Combat Suicide Among School-Aged Children

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. June 20, 2016

Howard Beach, NY (June 20, 2016) Describing it as “an important effort to prevent tragedy before it happens,” Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. applauded the recent State Senate passage of a bill (S.4261) he co-sponsors to require the State Education Department (SED) and State Office of Mental Health (OMH) to develop materials focusing on suicide prevention and signs of depression among school-aged children and to provide them with educators throughout New York State.

“There is no question that early intervention and recognition of suicidal behavior is key to preventing these heart-breaking incidents among students,” said Addabbo, a member of the Senate Committee on Education. “We need to keep our eyes wide open, paying close attention to our children both at home and at school and working to better recognize the signs of impending tragedy.”

Under the bill, the SED and OMH would develop materials on suicide prevention and signs of depression to be made available through their public websites. In addition, SED would be charged with ensuring that suicide prevention instruction is provided to secondary-school aged children by certified health education teachers.

To underscore the importance of these efforts, Addabbo noted that suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 24 in the United States.

“In addition, a study released by the National Center for Health Statistics in April showed that the overall United States suicide rate has surged to its highest levels in almost 30 years, affecting virtually all age groups,” he said.

Of particular alarm to the researchers was a finding that the national suicide rate among girls ages 10 to 14, while low, tripled from 50 in 1999 to 150 in 2014. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, suicide is the second leading cause of death for New York residents ages 15 to 34, and the third leading cause for children ages 10 to 14.

“By teaching our educators to better recognize the signs of potential suicidal tendencies, and by helping our young people to understand the gravity of this problem, I hope we will see fewer students giving up on life before they have had a chance to live it,” said Addabbo, adding that it is vital that at-risk youth be made aware that help is available to them. “Our school-aged children are already going through so many physical, emotional and psychological changes as they grow up, which may make some of our youth more susceptible to self-harm. We already know that kids can be cruel at times, and when you add in easy access to social media that can be used for ceaseless and horrific bullying, we’re looking at a recipe for possible disaster.”

As the father of two daughters, Addabbo said he is committed to ensuring that all students in New York State are provided with support systems and programs that could very well mean the difference between life and death for young people who are in despair and feel they have nowhere to turn for compassion or assistance.

“As a parent, I cannot even begin to imagine the agony and overwhelming grief of losing a child, particularly if they die by their own hand,” he said. “This educational outreach could help to ensure that fewer mothers and fathers are ever placed in a position of suffering these insurmountable and senseless tragedies.”

Having passed the State Senate, the bill was under review by the Assembly Education Committee.