



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Tedisco

Tedisco Passes “Jacobe’s Law” to Ensure Schools Notify Parents When Their Children are Bullied

SENATOR JAMES TEDISCO June 19, 2017

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Senator Jim Tedisco (R,C,I,REF-Glenville) today announced that the New York State Senate has passed his legislation, “Jacobe’s Law,” to require that schools notify parents when a child is being threatened by a bully.

“Jacobe’s Law” ([S.1355B](#)) requires that school employees charged with receiving reports of harassment, bullying or discrimination make a reasonable and good faith effort to contact

the parents or guardians of the students involved in an incident of bullying or harassment.

In April 2015, 13-year-old Jacobe Taras of Fort Edward, tragically took his own life as a result of bullying. Jacobe's parents, Christine and Richard Taras, say they were not notified by Jacobe's school of the extent of bullying he faced.

A heartbreaking [front-page article in the Times Union](#) brought to light an alarming gap in the Dignity for All Students Act, the state's anti-bullying law, in terms of not requiring schools to alert parents when their child has been bullied or is believed to be the perpetrator of bullying. The Dignity for All Students Act currently leaves it up to each school district to develop its own policy for parental notification. "Jacobese Law" would make parental notification about bullying mandatory.

"Jacobese Taras's death was a sad and tragic lesson for the urgent need to require transparency and parental notification when a child is bullied at school. No child should have to experience bullying in or out of school. Schools should make parents aware of threats of violence to their children so that a parent or guardian can take action they deem appropriate to protect their child's safety and emotional well-being," said Tedisco, who served close to a decade as a special education teacher and guidance counselor and has a master's degree in special education.

"If the statistics and incidences of bullying are important enough to report to bureaucrats at State Ed, then they are important enough to make parents aware of to intervene and potentially avert a tragedy. My heart goes out to the Taras family. I can only hope that through 'Jacobese Law' we can bring about a positive change that can stop bullying and save lives," said Tedisco.

“Parents have a right to know what's going on with their children as our schools should be safe places for children to enjoy learning and not fear for their physical and emotional well-being. Bullying is not ‘kids just being kids,’ it’s abusive behavior that can have devastating and potentially fatal consequences as my family knows all too well,” said Christine Taras, Jacobe’s mother. “If I had known what was going on behind school and bus doors, which was detailed in Jacobe’s suicide note, I know he would still be with us today. Now all I have is a broken heart and my memories. I thank Senator Tedisco for his leadership in fighting to get this bill passed in the Senate and helping obtain a sponsor for it in the Assembly. I hope Jacobe’s story can help lead to positive change and save lives.”

Bullying is defined based on what’s listed under the [Dignity for All Students Act](#) and what incidences schools are currently required to report to the New York State Education Department.

Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy (D-Albany) is sponsoring the bill in the Assembly.