

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING 304
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
(518) 455-3959
FAX (518) 426-6887

[HTTP://KLEIN.NYSENATE.GOV/](http://klein.nysenate.gov/)

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



JEFFREY D. KLEIN
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
34TH DISTRICT

1250 WATERS PLACE, SUITE 1202
BRONX, NEW YORK 10461
(718) 822-2049
FAX (718) 822-2321

JDKLEIN@NYSENATE.GOV

March 19, 2012

Senator Chris Dodd
MPAA Chairman and CEO
Washington, D.C.
1600 Eye St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Senator Dodd,

I am writing to express my sincere disappointment in the Motion Picture Association of America's (MPAA) decision to issue an R-rating for the documentary film *Bully*. In New York State, bullying and cyber bullying have become an issue that cannot be ignored any longer. Last year alone, three teens living in different areas of the state committed suicide, it is believed because of the emotional torment and mental suffering they endured from being bullied. Social media has created a world in which words are used as weapons and have a dangerous and harmful effect on our young people. To exclude the very individuals most affected by this growing epidemic - children and teens - from seeing this film, would be a disservice to the mission of the MPAA.

Throughout the past several months my office has been conducting a first-of-its kind statewide survey asking students to share their experiences with cyber bullying. With more than four thousand replies so far, almost all respondents have informed us that they have either been cyber bullied or have peers who have been cyber bullied **All of these students are under the age of eighteen and therefore would be excluded from being able to see the film *Bully*.**

Alongside bullying experts, I have visited schools throughout the state to teach students the detrimental effects their words have on their schoolmates. As I toured schools and listened to students and their experiences, most expressed that profanity was used freely and frequently. Children need to know that their words have a profound effect on their peers. The language in this film is simply a reflection of the real discourse happening in our schools, on playgrounds and in cyber space.

The MPAA described the profanity in *Bully* as sensationalized "adult content" but I would express that from my experiences this is simply a depiction of what's occurring in reality, and although striking at times, we should not censor reality. To combat cyber bullying I have also introduced legislation into the State Senate that would create a new penal law defining cyber bullying and making it an offense under the stalking law. This law would be seen as a felony if elevated to a hate crime.

I would ask that the MPAA help in the fight against bullying and reconsider the R-rating in the context of its educational importance and life-saving potential. The power of digital media and films on adolescents can surely not be dismissed. You have a chance to make a difference in the lives of young people throughout the country. Perhaps if this film was screened a year ago, the tragic loss of those three students may have been averted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Klein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Senator Jeffrey D. Klein
New York State Senator
34th District (Bronx- Westchester)