



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senate Calls for Assembly Action on Bill to Prohibit Sexual Conduct Between Students and School Employees

CATHARINE YOUNG June 12, 2008

Senator Cathy Young and members of the New York State Senate Majority Conference today called for Assembly action on legislation that would prohibit school employees or volunteers from engaging in sexual conduct with a student, regardless of the student's age. The bill, passed the Senate unanimously on February 26, 2008 and is supported by the New York State District Attorneys' Association.

"Currently in New York State it is not against the law for teachers to prey upon 17 and 18 year old students. These teachers have power and authority over these students. They should be protecting them, not victimizing them," said Senator Young. "We're calling on the Assembly to take action and because when parents send their children off to school they expect that they'll be in a safe environment."

The call for Assembly action came yesterday at a Capitol press conference, where Senators were joined by Heidi Roosa, whose 17-year-old daughter was involved in a relationship with her Independent Study program teacher Leon Almeida while she was a student at the Spackenkill School District. Almeida encouraged her to run away with him, quit school and sever contact with her family. Because she was over the age of consent, the Roosas had no legal recourse.

In 2006, Franklin County District Attorney Derek P. Champagne was faced with a similar situation where a teenage girl was involved in a detrimental relationship with a teacher at her school. Because there was no appropriate law, he had no power to prosecute the teacher. Since that incident, DA

Champagne has been actively involved as an advocate for this legislation.

Twenty-two other states have recognized the seriousness of this issue and criminalize sexual misconduct between students and teachers.