



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

## Senator Flanagan Disappointed By Senate Democrats Rejection Of Cyber-Bullying Legislation

JOHN J. FLANAGAN July 8, 2010

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION**

To protect the state's children, Senator John Flanagan (2<sup>nd</sup> Senate District) and his Senate Republicans recently offered an amendment to a proposal by the Senate Democrats called the Dignity for All Students Act, which creates a limited class of protections for students but does not include any provisions to stop cyber bullying. The amendment was aimed at updating New York's laws to discourage, prevent and punish all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying.

Unfortunately, the Senate Democrats rejected the added protections the amendment would have provided to all students and passed only the Dignity for All Students Act. Even without the addition of the amendment, Senator Flanagan voted to support the Dignity for All Students Act to make sure that some of the worthwhile protections for children were enacted.

"While the Dignity for All Students Act is a good first step in enhancing the protection of all students and I am proud to have voted for it, it fails to recognize cyber-bullying and therefore fails to face reality. As a legislator and, more importantly, as a parent, I know the dangers of this type of bullying and am disappointed that the Democrats failed to act on behalf of the children," stated Senator Flanagan. "We all know that cyber-bullying can take place outside the border of a school district but it is important that we all work together to provide the children of this state with as much protection as we can."

New York is currently one of only a handful of states that does not have a law against cyber bullying. The amendment Senator Flanagan and his colleagues supported would:

- Require school districts to include methods for discouraging acts of bullying and cyber-bullying within the required instruction in civility, citizenship, and character education;
- Define bullying and cyber-bullying and add these acts to the list of incidents for which disciplinary measures must be taken pursuant to the school district's code of conduct;
- Require all school employees to report incidents of bullying and cyber-bullying; and
- Create the crime of aggravated harassment of teachers and school personnel.

This anti-bullying package would give New York schools the tools they need to help reduce bullying by including instructions about discouraging bullying within a school's character education program and requiring all school employees to report incidents of bullying if they have a reasonable suspicion that a student is being victimized.

“It is clear that New York State needs to get up to date with how we approach the growing problem of all forms of bullying including cyber-bullying. Our amendment was an opportunity that the Senate Democrats failed to take advantage of and it is my hope that partisanship will be put aside so that we can act in the best interests of the students of the state. While that did not happen this time, there is still time for the Democrats to take action,” stated Senator Flanagan.

The amendment that Senator Flanagan and his colleagues proposed is also provided in separate legislation that could still be approved in the Senate and the Assembly.

Any residents who wish to support Senator Flanagan in his efforts to expand protections for students can [click here](#).

[Please click here to view video of Senator Flanagan discussing amendment](#)