



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

## Dignity For All Students Act

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**News From New York State**

**Senator Shirley L. Huntley**

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**Media Contact:** Lisa King (404)587-4496 [lisaking530@gmail.com](mailto:lisaking530@gmail.com)

### **Landmark “Dignity for All Students Act” Signed Into Law Law prevents discrimination and harassment against students on school grounds**

(Jamaica, NY) Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica) announced the signing into law of legislation (S. 1987B) that would keep children from facing harassment and abuse at school.

The goal of the ‘Dignity for all Students Act’ is to provide all students with a safe and nurturing school environment conducive to learning by putting an end to harassment and discrimination based on, but not limited to, race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex.

Senator Huntley, who co-chairs the Senate Committee on NYC School Governance said, “The Dignity for All Students Act was a much-needed bill I supported that will help curb bullying and harassment of students in public schools based on individual characteristics. Such

bullying and harassment creates a hostile environment and often involves verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that negatively affects students' educational performance and should not be tolerated.”

In order to foster a safer, more constructive school environment, the law:

- Prohibits harassment or discrimination against students by employees or students while on school property or on school grounds
- Defines “harassment” as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would unreasonably interfere with educational performance, opportunities, benefits or physical or emotional well-being or cause fear for physical safety
- Prohibits discrimination based on an individual’s actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.

A 2005 study discovered that 39 percent of New York students reported that bullying and harassment is a serious problem in school. 66 percent of students said they were harassed because of how they look, while 52 percent acknowledged being harassed because they were perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. 57 percent revealed being bullied because of the way they expressed their gender.

“Bullying has been a problem in our schools for far too long,” said Senator Huntley. “In severe cases, it has resulted in suicide among victims of harassment. It is my hope that our new law will help save children throughout the State from suffering in silence.”