



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## ADDABBO: Landmark “Dignity for All Students Act” Signed Into Law; prevents discrimination, harassment and bullying against students on school grounds

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR September 15, 2010

| ISSUE: **CHILDREN, YOUTH, JUVENILE CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

Queens, NY, September 14, 2010 – At the start of another school year, NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Howard Beach), who serves on the Senate’s Education Committee, announced that Governor David A. Paterson has signed into law legislation (S1987B/Duane) that would keep children from facing harassment and abuse at school.

Last spring, when the school year was winding down, Senator Addabbo had sponsored some anti-bullying lectures at local middle schools in his district, which immediately followed parent-teacher meetings. The 45-minute talks featured Mark Weiss, Operation Respect’s Education Director, and included lively Q&As with over 100 parents and children.

The “Dignity for All Students Act” goal is designed 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.

“This law exemplifies our commitment to providing all students with a safe learning environment,” said Addabbo. “I am proud to support this legislation. Incidents of harassment and intimidation should not be tolerated in our schools. Our educational environments must be free from any impediments that hamper a student’s opportunity to learn.”

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

“Bullying has been a problem in our schools for far too long,” said Addabbo.

“Our kids can no longer continue to be subjected to harassment and abuse in an environment where they are expected to mature and progress. This legislation

takes the important step of protecting our kids from attacks based on who they are or what they look like, and lets them focus on education and development.”

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