



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Klein, Scarborough, Miss NY, Launch New York Cyberbully Census

JEFFREY D. KLEIN October 13, 2011

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QUEENS, NY – State Senator Jeffrey D. Klein, (D-Bronx/ Westchester), and Assemblyman William Scarborough, (D-Jamaica) were joined by Miss New York 2011 Kaitlin Monte, anti-cyberbullying advocates, and victims to announce the launch of the New York Cyberbully Census.

This data gathering initiative - the first of its kind - is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the problem of cyberbullying in New York State. According to the National Crime Prevention Council, more than 43% of teens nationwide have reported being the victims of cyberbullying. While news of cyberbullying related teen suicides - most recently the death of a 14-year-old Buffalo area student – have been well reported, there are

currently no New York specific numbers on just how pervasive and extensive the trend of cyberbullying is.

“We know that cyberbullying is happening in New York State and, tragically, we know that words can kill in the digital age,” Senator Klein said. “The New York Cyberbully Census will enable us to gather hard data about the extent of cyberbullying in New York, help build the coalitions we need to combat this destructive behavior, and help save lives.”

The New York Cyberbully Census, which can be found at www.nycyberbullycensus.com, is a 12-question online survey aimed at gathering information from students in Grades 3-12 throughout New York. The survey is designed to gauge student attitudes, as well as experiences with cyberbullying. The survey is anonymous, allowing students to answer questions honestly and without fear of embarrassment.

Monte, who has made combating bullying part of her platform as Miss New York 2011, has joined Klein in efforts to promote the New York Cyberbully Census. Additionally, the survey will be promoted by the anti-bullying groups Teen Angels, the Jamie Isaacs Foundation for Anti-Bullying, and similar organizations.

“I am thrilled to see this initiative take off and hope that –in addition to providing key information about bullying – it will succeed in empowering students to feel they have a voice and are being heard,” Monte said. “Senator Klein is enabling all New Yorkers to be part of the solution. It is an exciting and innovative step forward.”

The survey was developed with Parry Aftab, a lawyer, recognized authority on anti-cyberbullying efforts and the founder of www.stopcyberbullying.com.

“We live in an age where bullies can leave the schoolyard and follow their victims everywhere a cell phone goes,” Aftab said. “I’m hopeful that this initiative will help people understand the magnitude of cyberbullying and result in some positive changes for victims who now feel there is no escape.”

Cyberbullying, which is persistent harassment through electronic communication, has become more and more prevalent as technology, such as smart phones and social networking sites, continue to evolve and make communication easy, quick and readily accessible to teens and youth. Many experts believe the laws, however, have not kept pace with technology, which has made cyberbullying difficult to prosecute.

Senator Klein and Assemblyman Scarborough have proposed new legislation to modernize New York's stalking laws to include cyberbullying and to make "bullycide," the act intentionally causing a suicide via cyberbullying, covered under manslaughter statutes.

"The issue of cyberbullying is widespread and more insidious than ever," said Assemblyman Scarborough said. "Because the Internet and social media present tremendous possibilities for the harassment and bullying of young people, we must update our laws to reflect the seriousness of the problem and the potential for permanent harm and even death."

The data from the Cyberbully Census, which is expected to run until the end of the year, will be collected and released during the next legislative session, which starts in January 2012.

"We know that there are many students who are being cyberbullied, but we are seeking to learn just how pervasive it has really become," said Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Orange). "By gathering the information anonymously from students themselves, we will get an open and honest picture of what these kids are dealing with, which will help us put an end to cyberbullying."

"Life is a precious gift that no one should ever have taken away from them – especially by someone who is out to destroy you with harsh words, jealousy, envy and lies," said student and advocate Jaime Isaacs. "You deserve to be alive and to live life to its greatest extent."