



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

## Senator Serrano and Council Member Mark-Viverito Speak out against Bullying

JOSÉ M. SERRANO May 30, 2012

(New York, NY)- State Senator José M. Serrano (D-Manhattan/Bronx) and City Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito (D-Manhattan/Bronx) today expressed their heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of 12 year old Joel Morales from Jefferson Houses in East Harlem, and spoke out against bullying in schools. On Tuesday, the young student took his life after enduring continued harrassment by bullies.

"My thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of Joel Morales," said Senator José Serrano. "We're all shocked and heartbroken by this unimaginable tragedy, and we must take this as a wake-up call to our local community that we must not tolerate bullying in any shape or form. We have lost too many lives, not only in New York, but across the country, due to children being teased and harassed by their peers. We must all- parents, teachers, students and local leaders- come together to ensure that our children feel safe and supported, and we must continue to work to expand protections for our most vulnerable students."

"Joel Morales was just 12 years old." Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito commented. "That he could be driven to end his young life in this way is truly unfathomable. By all accounts, Joel was a wonderful young man who was, nevertheless, teased and harassed. His mother did everything within her power to make life better for her son but the cruel and painful sting of bullying drove him to take his own life. My heart truly breaks for Ms. Babilonia, as well as Joel's entire family and his friends. In memory of Joel and in an effort to prevent another tragedy like this one from taking place, my office will work with our local schools and youth groups to send a message that bullying will not be tolerated and that there is help out there for young people who feel overcome with pain. We need all of our young people to stand up for one another and also to assist friends who need help. Tragedies like this one unfortunately underscore the importance of these efforts."

In 2010 New York State passed The Dignity Act, anti-bullying legislation which is set to take effect in July 1st of 2012. The legislation requires that schools develop policies that will create an environment free of discrimination and harassment- aiming to prevent bullying before it starts.