



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Addabbo: Governor Cuomo Signs Bill to Help Protect Students From Cyberbullying

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR August 14, 2012

**Queens, NY, August 14, 2012** – As people start to prepare for a new school year, **NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.**, who serves on the Senate’s Education Committee, was pleased that Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed legislation (**S.7740-2011**) that will help protect students from cyberbullying in public schools as well as other forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination. The new law, supported by Addabbo, is designed to strengthen a school’s response to harassment and bullying through improved reporting, investigation, intervention, training and prevention.

The Education Law is amended by requiring school districts to act immediately to end harmful behavior when cyberbullying occurs and to establish protocols to respond to cyberbullying, harassment, bullying and discrimination to prevent recurrences and protect targeted students. It would also set training requirements for current and new school employees to help teachers and administrators better prevent and respond to bullying and other harmful acts. The new law goes into effect on July 1, 2013.

Addabbo, “Cyberbullying is an especially harmful form of bullying. Through increasing accessibility to technology, bullying has transformed from a predominantly school-based issue to a broader societal problem beyond the classroom to bullying on the job, on athletic teams and through the Internet. Research has revealed a link between cyberbullying and low self-esteem, family problems, academic problems, school violence and delinquent behavior, as well as long-term consequences that include increased depression, substance use, aggressive impulses, and school truancy. Some recent cyberbullying cases in the news, sometimes combined with other forms of bullying, have led to suicide. If it’s left ignored, bullying can rapidly escalate into even more serious violence and abuse.”

In 2009, more than 7 million U.S. students ages 12-18—representing 28 per cent of all students in that age range—were bullied at school and more than 1.5 million students, or 6 per cent, were subject to cyberbullying on or off school property. A 2011 survey of New York high school students showed that during 2010, almost 18 per cent had been bullied on school property and 16 per cent had experienced cyberbullying through email, chat rooms, instant messaging, Web sites, texting or other electronic means. Additionally, specific provisions of the new law that crack down on cyberbullying are:

- Requires Schools to Act when Cyberbullying Occurs – on or off campus, when it creates or would create a substantial risk to the school environment, substantially interferes with a student’s educational

performance or mental, emotional or physical well-being, or causes a student to fear for his or her physical safety;

- Ensures Proper Protocols Are in Place to Deal with Cyberbullying – the law requires school districts to put in place protocols to deal with cyberbullying, harassment, bullying and discrimination, including assignment of a school official to receive and investigate reports and who will initiate prompt reporting, investigations and responsive actions to prevent recurrence of any verified bullying; coordinate with law enforcement when appropriate; develop a bullying-prevention strategy; and notify all school community members of the school’s policies;
- Sets Training Requirements for School Employees to Help Identify and Prevent Cyberbullying – the law sets training requirements for current school employees, as well as for new teachers and administrators applying for a certificate or license, on the identification and mitigation of harassment, bullying, cyberbullying and discrimination.

“I want all students to learn in a safe, harassment-free environment,” Senator Addabbo concluded.

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