



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

## Sanders Brings Mobile Office to Richmond Hill; Meets with Young Student Concerned About Bullying

JAMES SANDERS JR. March 11, 2016



State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village) brought his mobile office to Richmond Hill yesterday where he met one-on-one with residents, listening to their concerns and suggestions, some of which included issues regarding health, safety and housing. He also spoke with a young student who was interested in preventing bullying.

“I enjoy the time I spend interacting with my constituents on a personal level and hearing about the issues that are affecting their lives right now, so I can provide them with

assistance,” Sanders said. “It is also important for me to hear their suggestions on how to make the community better. They have entrusted me to represent the district and serve them to the best of my ability and that is what I am here to do.”

Nicholas Henriquez, 9, of South Richmond Hill, attended the mobile office with his mother, Jennifer Odermatt, and uncle, Michael Odermatt. He had written a letter to Senator Sanders last month suggesting that he introduce anti-bullying legislation, and wanted to meet with him in person to discuss the issue.

“I have a bill that I wrote that I would like to become a law,” Henriquez said in his correspondence. “I would like the people that bully to be punished, not just in school, but in our community.”

Sanders praised Henriquez for taking the initiative to solve the problem of bullying and told the young student that he had a bright future ahead of him as a legislator. He invited Henriquez to join him in Albany to witness firsthand how government works and how laws are created. Sanders also said he would speak about Henriquez and his concerns on the senate floor.

“You want to defend other students and that’s the type of leadership that we need, but you have to figure out a way to do that, that doesn’t get you into trouble,” Sanders told Henriquez. “Two wrongs don’t make a right, however it is important that we stand up for people who can’t defend themselves. Older students should not be picking on younger students. It’s just not right. It’s cowardly. It’s very heroic if we stand up to prevent it. At your age, I wish I had done that.”

Sanders has introduced a workplace bullying bill, (S6438), which would establish a civil

course of action for employees who are subject to an abusive work environment. Studies have shown that 16 to 21 percent of employees directly experience workplace bullying, abuse and harassment, and such environments can cause feelings of shame and humiliation and lead to health problems such as stress, anxiety, depression, hypertension, reduced immunity to infection, gastrointestinal disorders and other conditions. The bill currently has 12 Senate co-sponsors and 78 Assembly co-sponsors.

Henriquez and his family were only a few of the dozens of residents that attended the Richmond Hill mobile office event, which was held at the Queens Library - Lefferts Boulevard Branch. Attendees sought help with issues such as acquiring Social Security benefits and rental assistance, increasing school safety, Medicaid and Medicare issues, and the need for vocational schools in Richmond Hill. Sanders' staffers took careful notes and filled out constituent intake forms so they could examine each problem in greater detail and follow-up with extended help.

Representatives from several city agencies and civic organizations were also on hand to offer assistance to attendees and inform them of available resources. Featured guests included: NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA), NYC Department of Transportation (DOT), 102nd Precinct Community Affairs (NYPD), NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Richmond Hill Economic Development Council (RHEDC), Richmond Hill Block Association (RHBA) and the Indo-Caribbean Alliance (ICA).

Senator Sanders' mobile office initiative was created in an effort to reach out to more constituents and make it easier for them to access services. It will travel to different areas of the district on a rotating basis.