Senator Avella Announces Legislation to Increase Penalty for Distracted Driving in School Zones

TONY AVELLA   September 14, 2017

Queens, NY – Today, State Senator Tony Avella announced plans to introduce legislation to combat distracted driving in school zones. A new study published by Zendrive found three counties in New York State—including Senator Avella's hometown of Queens County—to be some of the worst for distracted driving in school zones.

Among the school zones with the highest level of distracted drivers in Queens, four are in Senator Avella's district. P.S. 79 and Holy Trinity School in Whitestone, P.S. 131 in Jamaica, and Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School in Oakland Gardens were among the Senate District 11 schools in areas that received the worst ratings in Queens County.

Currently, New York State law prohibits the use of cell phones while operating a motor vehicle—"use of portable electronic devices: Except as otherwise provided in this section, no person shall operate a motor vehicle while using any portable electronic device while such vehicle is in motion"—however, there is nothing on record that would increase the penalty of doing such in a school zone.

"My new legislation would seek to penalize drivers who are reckless enough to break the law and put our kids in danger. Driving while texting, playing games, or being consumed in your phone in anyway is already one of the most careless and dangerous things you can do but

doing so near a school is exceptionally troubling. Parents should not have to worry every day that their child might not make it home because a driver couldn't wait a couple of minutes before checking their notifications," **said Senator Avella.**

"This bill will curb distracted driving in school zones, and the use of a mobile device overall, by increasing the penalty for risking the lives of our children on their way to or from school," **added Avella.**

Senator Avella was inspired to introduce this legislation after seeing a report on Zendrive's efforts on *CBS This Morning* today.