



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elaine Phillips

## Senator Phillips Joins Colleagues To Call For Passage Of ‘Jacobe’s Law’

ELAINE PHILLIPS May 7, 2018



Senator Elaine Phillips today joined fellow legislators and Christine and Richard Taras, the parents of 13-year-old Jacobe Taras, who tragically took his own life as a result of bullying, to call for the passage of “Jacobe’s Law.” The measure would require schools to notify parents when a bully is threatening a child.

“No child should be alone dealing with the mental anguish that results from being bullied,” Senator Phillips said. “Parents must be notified to ensure the situation does not escalate and

that proper actions and counseling can take place to prevent tragic outcomes like the one the Taras family and countless others have experienced. Too often, we hear horrifying stories of children taking their own lives as a result of bullying, including right here on Long Island. This measure closes a loophole in state law so parents must be made aware of these incidents occurring at school. I urge the Assembly and Governor Cuomo to take up this measure that can save lives and bring an end to these senseless tragedies.”

S.1355B: “Jacobe’s Law,” which passed the Senate in February, would require that school employees charged with receiving reports of harassment, bullying or discrimination contact the parents or guardians of the students involved – both the bullies and victims –when an incident of bullying or harassment occurs.

In 2012, the Dignity for All Students Act became law as a means to address bullying in schools. Although schools are required to report incidents to the state Education Department, the Dignity for All Students Act does not require schools to alert parents when their child has been bullied or is believed to be the perpetrator of bullying. Rather, the law currently leaves it up to each school district to decide whether they will or will not notify parents of children involved in an incident of bullying. This serious gap in state law has led to fatal consequences.

Jacobe’s parents said they were not notified by his school of the extent of bullying he faced. This was not an isolated incident as there are many heartbreaking stories of young people injuring themselves or taking their own lives because of bullying.

“Parents have a right to know what's going on with their children as our schools should be safe places for children to enjoy learning and not fear for their physical and emotional well-being. Bullying is not ‘kids just being kids,’ it’s abusive behavior that can have devastating and potentially fatal consequences as my family knows all too well,” said Christine Taras,

Jacobe's mother. "If we had known what was going on behind school and bus doors, which was detailed in Jacobe's suicide note, we know he would still be with us today. Now all we have are our broken hearts and memories. The Senate has done its job, we now ask that the Assembly bring this common sense bill forward for a vote. We hope Jacobe's story can help lead to positive change and save lives."

Bullying is defined based on what's listed under the Dignity for All Students Act and what incidences schools are currently required to report to the New York State Education Department.