



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Luis R. Sepúlveda

Senator Luis Sepúlveda, Assemblyman Victor Pichardo, Family of Lesandro “Junior” Guzman-Feliz, and Community Advocates Unveil Legislation to Help Protect Children from Gang and Other Violence

SENATOR LUIS SEPULVEDA July 10, 2018

| ISSUE: **PROTECT CHILDREN FROM GANG, VIOLENCE, GANG VIOLENCE, SCHOOL SAFETY, SMALL BUSINESS**

State Senator Luis Sepulveda and Assemblyman Victor Pichardo announced Tuesday, July 10, introduction of “Safe Havens for Endangered Children” legislation that would require all small businesses to call police when a child or young person in danger seeks help from them.

The proposed law, to be known as “Junior’s Law,” comes after Bronx 15-year-old Lesandro (Junior) Guzman-Felix was dragged from a bodega where he had sought refuge and stabbed to death by members of a violent street gang that had been chasing him, all caught on video.

Joined by the slain youth’s family members, clergy and community leaders at a press conference outside the bodega where the teen was murdered, Senator Sepulveda and Assemblyman Pichardo said the Safe Havens bill would also amend the education law to help create “Safe Walking Home Zones” by having school officials work with local chambers of commerce to create safe pathways to and from schools.

A second piece of legislation would also require small businesses to keep first aid kits.

“While the bodega owner where the incident occurred DID try to help and did call 911 twice, according to police, we want to make sure that any business owner or their employees who encounter a situation involving a minor who has been abused or may be in danger has a duty to try to help,” said Senator Sepulveda. “Community businesses should be safe havens for our youth. They should promptly notify police.”

“The murder of Lesandro “Junior” Guzman-Feliz has devastated our close-knit Bronx communities,” said Assemblyman Pichardo. “While I applaud the New York City Police Department for swiftly apprehending the suspects, we as legislators must do more to address the scourge of gang violence that has claimed far too many lives here in the Bronx and across our state. The safety of our children and families is always paramount and I’ll do everything I can to get violent gang members off our streets.”

The slain teen’s father, Lissandro Guzman, speaking in Spanish, said “I feel very content, and with all my heart, I hope this bill that carries son’s name gets passed so it can prevent situations like this from happening again, and so we can create more security for our beloved children.”

Depending on the situation, if a business with fewer than 50 employees fails to “provide a safe refuge for a child who had physical injury inflicted upon him or is in imminent danger of such injury until authorities arrive,” the business would be subject to penalties to be determined by the commissioner of the state Office of Children and Family Services.

Sepulveda said that he and Assemblyman Pichardo are still looking at what potential fines or other sanctions might be imposed.

The bill to require first aid kits in small businesses would amend state labor and public health laws to require small businesses with fewer than 50 employees to have and maintain a first aid kit on the premises at all times. Compliance would be checked during regular health or safety inspections of the building and business.

“We need to ensure that businesses are equipped to help those who are injured to save lives,” said Senator Sepulveda.

Twelve alleged members of the Trinitarios gang are now under arrest in connection with the June 20 attack. They face charges of murder, manslaughter, gang assault and criminal possession of a weapon, according to police.

The terrified teen was chased for blocks after a convoy of four vehicles carrying the gang members mistook Guzman-Feliz for their intended target, a rival from a sub-set of the gang.

The teen ran into the bodega at E. 183rd Street and Bathgate Avenue and hid behind the counter, but was dragged outside and stabbed several times.

He staggered to nearby St. Barnabas Hospital, where he collapsed on the sidewalk. He died a short time later.

Joining the press conference, David Aviles, community leader and founder of PR Flags Up, stated: "Junior died because we failed as a community. Many could've help him at any given point in this horrific attack, but choose to stand down and not provide any human compassion to him We the people have vowed to let no other child in danger go without help. We must be every child's keeper!"

Educator and community leader Luis Torres said: "The death of Junior was a tragedy. We need to ensure this never happens again. Parents cannot continue to bury their children. We as a community must work together to find solutions to problems the plague our community.

“What I hope to accomplish with Junior’s Law is to better prepare small business for emergencies. Similar to the training school personnel receive, businesses need to be equipped

with first aid equipment and training.

"We also want children to have safe spaces to and from school. So, from the tragedy we will bring about positive changes."