



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 554

Resolution calling on the New York State Department of Education to mandate bystander intervention training for all staff, educators and administrators, require annual training for students in grades 6-12, and resources for parents around the issues of harassment and bullying.

By Council Members Hudson, Farías, Louis, Restler, Hanif, Ung, Avilés, Gutiérrez and Riley

Whereas, Bullying and harassment are serious societal problems and widespread in schools throughout the United States (U.S.); and

Whereas, The most recent data available from the National Center for Education Statistics, a division of the U.S. Department of Education, found that in 2019 approximately 22% or 1 in 5 students ages 12-18 reported being bullied at school during the school year; and

Whereas, According to stopbullying.gov, a federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, bullying not only affects those who are bullied, but also those who bully, and those who witness bullying, known as “bystanders”; and

Whereas, Bullying and harassment can interfere with a student’s ability to learn and can lead to lower grades, dropping out of school, mental health issues such as depression and engaging in high risk behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse, and even suicide; and

Whereas, New York State enacted its own anti-bullying law, the “Dignity for All Students Act” (DASA), in September 2010, which took effect on July 1, 2012; and

Whereas, The goal of DASA is to provide the State’s public school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying; and

Whereas, DASA requires schools to collect and report data regarding incidents of discrimination,

harassment, and bullying; and

Whereas, Further, DASA requires school districts to create policies, procedures and guidelines intended to create a school environment that is free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination; and

Whereas, As part of this effort, schools are responsible for providing training to employees to raise awareness of, as well as prevent and respond to, acts of harassment, bullying, and discrimination, and

Whereas, However, DASA doesn't specify any particular type of employee training, nor require specific anti-bullying and harassment instruction for students, rather leaving it up to individual schools and districts to determine; and

Whereas, Bystander intervention training is an evidence-based strategy to reduce harassment, bullying, and violence; and

Whereas, According to the New York City Commission on Human Rights, "Bystander intervention is built on the idea that we all play a role in creating safe public spaces for each other when we see our neighbors and community members facing bias, discrimination, or harassment"; and

Whereas, Moreover, bystander intervention trainings provide witnesses with the tools and strategies to safely respond when they witness incidents of bullying and harassment; and

Whereas, Anti-bullying intervention programs that have been shown to be most effective implemented activities at the individual, peer, classroom, school, and parent levels; and

Whereas, To date, the New York City Department of Education has not required bystander intervention training for staff (to include teachers, administrators and other appropriate staff) or instruction for students, nor has it provided training and additional resources to parents and guardians of these students; and

Whereas, The quality of implementation of prevention programs has been found to be a significant factor in achieving positive outcomes; and

Whereas, To optimize learning, bystander intervention training and resources should be developed by experts in anti-harassment/anti-bullying spaces in New York City; the training offered to staff, administrators,

and parents should be a minimum of 60 minutes and include a live in-person or virtual instructor; and the training offered to students should be a minimum of 2 hours and offered as live, in-person instruction; and

Whereas, Requiring bystander intervention training for school staff, instruction for students, and resources for parents regarding harassment and bullying would help to create a safe environment and positive learning conditions for all students; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Department of Education to mandate bystander intervention training for all staff, educators and administrators, require annual training for students in grades 6-12, and resources for parents around the issues of harassment and bullying.

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JA
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