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New York State Senate Passes Dignity for All Students Act

Bill Would Become First-Ever State Law to Include Protections for Transgender New Yorkers

NEW YORK - The New York State Senate last night passed the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), an anti-bullying bill that would protect students from bullying and harassment on the basis of gender identity and expression and sexual orientation. If signed into law by Governor Paterson, DASA would become New York State's first-ever law to include specific protections for transgender New Yorkers.

The 58-3 vote in the Senate follows passage by the Assembly earlier this year by a vote of 138-4. DASA now heads to Governor David A. Paterson, who is widely expected to sign the bill.

"Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students face tremendous amounts of bullying and harassment in New York schools. We applaud the New York State Legislature for taking this tremendous step to protect vulnerable students from the discrimination that can undermine their ability to succeed in the educational system and beyond," Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund Executive Director Michael Silverman said. "As the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Pride March approaches this weekend in New York City, we can all be proud of New York's achievement in moving to protect students who just want an equal shot at an education."

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students in New York experience bullying and harassment at alarming rates. One recent survey conducted by GLSEN found that 79% had been verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation and 62% had been verbally harassed because of how they expressed their gender.

The Dignity for All Students Act would allow teachers, parents, students, and school administrators to address bullying and bias-related behavior of all kinds that interfere with student safety and learning. The Act will foster the development of rules to prevent and respond to discriminatory harassment and hate violence. It will establish teacher, staff and administrative training guidelines. Discrimination awareness will be incorporated into civility and character education curricula. And incidents of bias harassment will have to be reported to the State Education Department.

In addition to protecting students on the basis of gender identity and expression, the Dignity for All Students Act protects students on the basis of sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, weight and disability.

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Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund is committed to ending discrimination based upon gender identity and expression, and to achieving equality for transgender people through public education, test-case litigation, direct legal services, community organizing and public policy efforts.