

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 1, 2009

CONTACT:

Eric Sumberg

Office of Senator Thomas K. Duane

212-633-8052

**Statement by Senator Thomas K. Duane
RE: Alleged Bias Attack on Transgender Woman
in Jackson Heights, Queens**

"Yesterday, the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF) reached out to my office about an alleged bias attack that took place early in the morning on June 19th in Jackson Heights, Queens."

"The victim, Leslie Mora, a 30-year-old transgender woman, reports that as she was walking on Roosevelt Avenue, two men severely beat her with a belt buckle while yelling homophobic slurs. The assailants were apprehended by the police, and the Queens County District Attorney's office has charged the men with felony assault with intent to cause physical injury with a weapon."

"Since learning of the attack, my office has been working with TLDEF, the NYC Anti-Violence Project and other elected officials to ensure that Leslie Mora's attackers are brought to justice. My staff has also reached out to the Queens District Attorney's office to express my concern about the case.

"All forms of violence, and especially violence motivated by hatred and bigotry, are deplorable. It is especially disturbing that this alleged attack took place during Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month, and is the second such Pride Month incident reported to me in recent days. Sadly, increased LGBT visibility and empowerment are often met with a spike in hate violence against LGBT people. This underscores our continued need to reduce ignorance, hatred and bigotry in our society."

"New York State's Hate Crimes Law, which I fought hard to pass, clearly states that crimes in which individuals are targeted and attacked because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation are classified as hate crimes. Ms. Mora's account of her assault appears to fit this definition. I expect the Queens District Attorney will expedite its investigation and pursue the case to the fullest extent of the law."

###