



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0355-2014, Version: *

Res. No. 355

Resolution calling on the New York City Department of Education to bring more mentoring programs into schools to combat bullying and violence, as called for in the Stop School Violence online petition campaign by Anthony Vargas, a local high school student.

By Council Members Levine, Chin, Cumbo, Koo, Mendez, Torres, Rodriguez, Koslowitz and Rosenthal

Whereas, School violence and bullying are serious and widespread problems in schools throughout the United States (U.S.); and

Whereas, According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), school violence is a public health problem because it can lead to a wide array of negative health behaviors and outcomes, including alcohol and drug use, suicide, depression, anxiety, and many other psychological problems; and

Whereas, Bullying has been found to have a negative impact on student attendance, academic outcomes and both physical and psychological well-being; and

Whereas, The national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), conducted by the CDC every two years among 9th through 12th grade students in public and private schools throughout the U.S., found that 6.9% were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in 2013; and

Whereas, The 2013 YRBS also reported that 8.1% of high school students were in a physical fight on school property, and 19.6% were bullied on school property; and

Whereas, In New York City, nearly one-fifth (18%) of public high school students reported they had been bullied at school, cyber-bullied or both in 2011, according to a Department of Health and Mental Hygiene study released in December 2013; and

Whereas, Anthony Vargas, an 11th grade student at Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning High

School, experienced verbal, emotional and physical bullying in middle school so severe that he was forced to transfer to another school; and

Whereas, Anthony’s experiences with bullying led him to launch an online campaign, called “Stop School Violence” in 2013; and

Whereas, The campaign urges local and state legislators to help reduce bullying by bringing peer-to-peer mentoring programs into City schools; and

Whereas, One such effort cited by Anthony Vargas, the Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring Program, has peer-to-peer programs in which older students serve as a “mentor” to a younger student, and has had a documented effect in countering many problem behaviors including bullying; and

Whereas, According to Big Brothers Big Sisters, 46% of students who get mentored are less likely to begin using drugs; 27% are less likely to begin using alcohol; 52% are less likely to skip school, 37% are less likely to skip a class, and 33% are less likely to hit someone; and

Whereas, Currently, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) partners with the iMentor program, in which students are matched one-to-one with same-gender, college-educated mentors for three to four years, however, this program was offered at just 16 schools in FY 14 ; and

Whereas, There are no other large-scale mentoring programs for students offered by the DOE, although some schools may have partnerships with mentoring organizations or operate their own mentoring programs on a smaller scale; and

Whereas, The goal of Anthony Vargas is to have peer-to-peer mentoring in all city schools, which would require older students to spend one class period per week with younger schoolmates; and

Whereas, According to a 2013 report by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, such mentoring programs would assist in the prevention of bullying, harassment and violence, enabling schools to better maintain supportive learning environments; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to bring more mentoring programs into schools to combat bullying and violence, as called for in the Stop School Violence online petition campaign by Anthony Vargas, a local high school student.

LS# 1400
JA
6/23/14