

**EDUCATION & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**  
**OF THE**  
**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**  
**MINUTES**

A meeting of the Education & Information Technology Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on March 11, 2014.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Leg. Sarah S. Anker, Chairwoman  
Leg. Monica Martinez, Vice Chair  
Leg. Thomas Cilmi  
Leg. Lou D'Amaro  
Leg. Robert Trotta

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Leg. Robert Calarco, 7th Legislative District  
George M. Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature  
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel to the Legislature  
Renee Ortiz, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Legislature  
Ben Zwirn, Suffolk County Community College  
Kevin Peterman, Suffolk County Community College  
Benny Pernice, Budget Review Office  
Tom Vaughn, County Executive's Office  
Michael Pitcher, Aide to Presiding Officer  
William Shilling, Aide to Legislator Calarco  
Greg Moran, Aide to Legislator Trotta  
Amy Ellis, Aide to Legislator Anker  
Justin Littell, Aide to Legislator D'Amaro  
John Martin, Public Health Educator  
Lori Benincasa, Director of Prevention Education & Training  
Jennifer Culp, Assistant to the Commissioner of Health Services  
And all other interested parties

**MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

**MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:**

Denise Weaver, Legislative Aide

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**THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 10:06 AM**

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Okay. We're going start our Education, Information Technology Committee meeting. Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator D'Amaro.

**SALUTATION**

Please remain standing for a moment of silent meditation and prayer as we remember those in the military who are protecting our freedom.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

Thank you. Okay. I don't -- I see we have no cards this morning. We will continue to our presenters. If our presenters can please come forward.

Today we have the Assistant to the Commissioner of Health Services, Jennifer Culp. We have the Director of Prevention Education Training, Lori Benincasa, and Public Health Educator, John Martin. And they will discuss what the Health Department is doing regarding bullying education programs. Welcome this morning.

**MR. MARTIN:**

Thank you. Good morning. Thank you for having us in. I am John Martin. I work with Suffolk County Office of Health Education across the parking lot. And as a Public Health Educator I go in and out of schools, colleges, libraries, the jail, drug rehabs, wherever there is a need for education prevention doing STD prevention, HIV, condom distribution, distracted driving programs. We've just been trained in the Narcan Program to help deliver that message, tobacco cessation, whatever part the prevention plays.

So I was asked to just briefly, very briefly describe what I do with Lori's program at the Office of Health Education. And this really started, as you might remember, about five, ten years ago when you saw on the news reports a lot of suicides across the nation. And it hit the news shows because connected to those suicides were long periods of bullying, long periods of aggression towards these kids that were attempting suicide or committing. And that did not go unnoticed in New York State so the New York State Department of Education wrote this law in 2010. And it was implemented in 2012; and then 2013, this past July, the addendum was added. So you're talking about a process here that I think is phenomenal.

What occurred was a -- an act that was written by the New York State Department of Education called the Dignity for all Students Act. And this act essentially -- and I have a little addendum I will leave you for the record, but I'll read it in their words. The Dignity Act says *New York State's Dignity for all Students Act seeks to provide the State's public, elementary, secondary schools with a safe and supportive, environment-free from discrimination, free from intimidation, taunting, harassment and bullying on school property, on the school bus and/or at a school function.* That was the original 2012 version. In July of 2013, they added cyberbullying. And, bully for them, sorry, bad -- that was really a bad joke.

But I did want to read you -- and then I'll tell just in my own words what, you know, what this all means. But there's a real exciting verse in the Dignity Act and it says: *The Dignity Act requires -- the guidance comes down from the State; every school has to implement this act; they had to incorporate it into their code of conduct and write it so that there was a very distinct separate protocol; that if there was a bullying incident on property or on a student's computer, and if -- and it, you know, spilled over into the school day or on a bus, that this would not be something the school missed or that the parents would end coming back and saying well, "what were you doing,*

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*my kid's now, you know, gone or hurt and -- and what" --* so this Dignity Act gave the schools the guidance and the mandate to, within a certain parameter of time, usually 24 hours, document that the bullying incident was reported, who it involved, followed up with that, who that person was, called the parents, document it, write it down and come to some conclusion on how they would handle it.

So that would eventually eliminate five, ten years' worth of news reports that somebody, you know, met their -- their, you know, their death by their own hand. And so this Dignity Act spells it out really nicely and I love that these words are being used.

The Dignity Act requires instruction in civility, citizenship and character education by expanding the concepts of tolerance and includes -- must include awareness and sensitivity training in the schools. Where -- this is where I come in. And it covers races, weights, you know, body weights, national origins, ethnic groups, religions, religious practices, mental and physical abilities, sexual orientations, gender identity and sexes. And the Dignity Act further amended, as I said, includes cyberbullying.

So my boss tasked me with the project a year-and-a-half ago. And I thought this would be an easy thing, write the curriculum and go implement it. And then as I started doing the research, this was not an easy thing. And the last thing I wanted to do, and the last thing these kids want, is to have a program where someone like me comes in and from a PowerPoint gives them definitions of bullying. That's not what ended up happening.

So I wrote a program, it's called the Dignity Act Healthy Communications and Peer Education. That's the -- on the screen. (Indicating) And I go in and teach about seven or eight -- every school's a little different -- two-hour sessions with the kids. And it's peer education. I'm training the kids to go train the kids. And it's all done with emotional intelligence at the core. Group games, role plays, applied improv, fun games, you know -- you know, things like animal farm where you assign one group to be chickens, one group to be horses, one group to be cows. They close their eyes and they have to go around mooing, clucking or -- or, you know, oinking and they -- when they find their -- their person, they link arms. And when they're all linked, then we have them open their eyes and we talk about how, you know, who was louder, was it hard to find; and then we do the game again but we assign a couple of sheep, two, and they have to, you know, go around baaing and, you know, in light of all the other animal noises. And it's harder to find your person. And after they're -- they're all linked, we talk about how that felt, you know, to be maybe one or two of something in a group. And in the classrooms there's that, that -- that occurs, you know, one gay kid in, you know, in what seems like a group of straight kids or, you know, one, you know, black skin kid in -- in a group of white skin kids. Or, you know, one Muslim, you know -- and one 300 pound kid in a group of healthy body weights. So where one, you know, eating disorder -- so -- and then we do it one more time where we assign one sheep. And they don't know it, but there's only one. They're never going to find their match. And -- and that kind of game when we play it and then process what that means goes directly to giving the kids skills on how to do interventions, how to think on their feet, how to take some risks and play. And when a group is at play, they have lowered their judgement, they've lowered their defense mechanisms and -- and that's what this program does.

And I'm privileged to -- to work it. I piloted it at West Babylon, started in November, October. We finished. The kids are now ready to go in and teach. They're going to teach every 9th grade class at the West Babylon High School. And then next month they're going to go into the middle schools and teach every kid there. And then they're going to go into the elementary schools and do it there. So the goal is that every school should have this program or something like it so that we change the culture from within. And the schools love this because the Dignity Act requires them to have character education, and that's what this is. It's aligned with the New York State Health Education Standards in the Dignity Act.

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And so having, you know, this kind of sway -- the vision is to have every school in Suffolk County be trained -- training up standards because that's what this is at the core. All these documents, all the data, all the research, all we're doing is training kids to be upstanders; instead of standing by, stand up, and, you know, back up your friends. So I modeled it after, you know, just that. And that's what we want to do. My vision is to have, you know, upstander of the month, you know, in every school district. You know, instead of your kid having honor student of the month at Port Jeff, you can have upstander of the month because that kid did something out of the ordinary to help a fellow member, you know, get through.

The West Babylon Peer Education kids are also teaching the faculty next Tuesday. They're going to teach all the teachers and practice in front of them at the same time, but that's what this movement is. And the best way to say it, Viktor Frankl, was a great psychiatrist during the Holocaust. And he was interned in a concentration camp. He kept seeing patients even though he was, you know, lived through just horrible conditions. And he wrote a book when he got out it. And it was "Man's Search for Meaning." There is a quote in there that kind of summarizes exactly what we're trying to do. And what Viktor Frankl said is, "*there's a stimulus, there's a response; and in between those two there's a pause. And that is our freedom.*" So for him, working, you know, waking up everyday to the Nazis, he was saying we have a choice -- he had a choice to -- to be happy with what he was given and manage it based on what he could manage. And when it comes to bullying, the pause in between the stimulus, which is the aggressor and the target, which is, you know, the victim, that's where these programs focus. That's where websites go. That's where we want to focus so that we stretch the pause out ever so, you know, easily and focus on teaching the kids how they have control over their reactions and think before they act and what they could do when they get, you know, challenged with a -- with an easy reaction to take. Yes, we talk about the bullies. And I have to define them, you know, but it's a small amount. And we talk about the -- the, you know, the victims and the things that they could do. But really it's about teaching them how to react with their own emotions.

So if -- if it'd be okay with you I have very -- three very short clips that I would like to show you. It really gets at what we're accomplishing. Would that be okay?

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Sure, absolutely.

**MR. MARTIN:**

Okay. It froze, I think.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

While you do that -- oh, okay, here we go.

#### FIRST VIDEO PLAYED

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Just to clarify watching the video and it says, *if you wouldn't say it in person, you shouldn't say it online.* And this is a video regarding cyberbullying.

**MR. MARTIN:**

That's right. That's right. Really effective for kids especially in high school. They're not bullied traditionally; they're bullied online, social networks.

#### SECOND VIDEO PLAYED

#### THIRD VIDEO PLAYED

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

And just to clarify the video says, I'm sorry -- can -- can't play it back? *Don't stand by. Stand up.* I believe that's what it said. And it shows kids standing up to bullying in kind of a passive way but just basically not letting the bullying get to them in an emotional way. So, very, very interesting clips. Thank you.

**MR. MARTIN:**

Thank you, thank you. This whole thing is not about just somebody pushing someone. It's about nonverbal, cyber, physical and relational, you know, gossip. And it changes the culture right up to -- through -- including the workplace. Really, we all -- we're not immune to it just because we're adults now. We're, you know, this is incumbent upon all of us to, you know, be kinder. Thank you. I really appreciate it.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Well, again, thank you for coming here today. I know we're -- we, you know, we're going to work on some projects together. I'm looking forward, you know, with -- with the bullying issue. For some reason my district has a concentrated -- a group of advocates. We have Get.A.Voice and also New York Families Against Bullying that have presented in Mt. Sinai. And school districts are very -- have been, you know, proactive because they have to. I mean, again, you know, we're here to help prevent, you know, issues within our communities. And this is a pretty severe issue because people, you know, kids commit suicide, you know, there's death, the issues with the kids getting the guns and shooting, you know, relating to bullying. There's so many problems that happen. If we can prevent bad things from happening, we have to do it. And, you know, that's -- that's what we do here in Suffolk County.

So do we have questions? Legislator Cilmi.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Thanks, Madam Chair. Thanks for your presentation. Very -- really good videos, really good videos. The last one -- the last one calls to mind a question that I -- that as you were talking about your game with -- with the sheep, I was curious about. So in your game when you designate at the end one person to be the sheep, but nobody else knows that and that person doesn't know that he or she is the only sheep, have you ever had any of the students who were the other farm animals also make a sheep sound and you say to them, you know, you weren't the sheep and that student says "*I was pretending just to make the other sheep feel*" -- have you ever had that happen?

**MR. MARTIN:**

Love that question. Close. At Lindenhurst last week, the -- the six chickens took the sheep in. Apparently the sheep -- the one kid that was the sheep was standing nearby still baaing. And they linked arms with him. And at the end of game I was trying to, you know, I was like "*okay, where's my sheep?*" And he was linked with the -- I think, with the pigs. And I said, "what happened?" And somebody said "I felt bad that he was standing there with nobody and we took him in." So that's a phenomenal, phenomenal metaphor for what we're going after. I love your question.

**LEG. CILMI:**

You know, it's not -- it's not surprising because I think over the last few years there's been a quite a lot done to educate children about the harmfulness of bullying. And certainly bullying is not new. You could -- you could obviously make a very good argument that it's evolved and gotten worse as a result of, you know, access of information, computers, Facebook, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

But, I mean, I was bullied as a kid. I've spoken to several, you know, several groups and at several events that are centered around bullying and anti-bullying efforts. I'm curious to know -- I don't know what your background is in this or -- or, you know, how long you've been studying this -- this issue and behavior among children, but it seems to me that, to a certain extent at least, bullying has always existed and -- and, as I said, has gotten, maybe has gotten worse as a result of the different

medium that are available.

But aside from that, aside from the internet, how -- how -- has bullying grown? Have the impacts of bullying changed? There was a day when we used to tell our kids, and hopefully we still do, *sticks and stones may break your bones but names will never hurt or shouldn't hurt*. Obviously they do hurt. But -- but I think the most important thing and I wonder if this still -- if this is still your -- if this is still a message that we're sending; the most important thing to have parents teach their kids is that, you know, they're only names and they shouldn't be affected by them and, you know, we're all individuals for a reason. What are your thoughts? That was a very long --

**MR. MARTIN:**

No, I loved every part of it. Maybe I can take your name and bring you into one of my groups for guest speaking. But --

**LEG. CILMI:**

By the way, I'm actually a graduate of West Babylon schools. So --

**MR. MARTIN:**

West Babylon was picked purposely because the -- the Principal, Dr. Vassallo, I saw her at -- at a conference. And she was talking about emotional intelligence how you can have a feeling and you have a thought. But if you can have the thought and control the feeling, you know, then you got something, which is not new. But she was -- she's, you know, that school is a -- is a leader in this area. And the Gay, Straight Alliance, they call it, a club for gay and straight students, has over 100 members. And so I handpicked -- I got to handpick with the President and the -- the advisor, 18 kids, so that school is phenomenal. They're leaders.

But there's about five or six other schools -- Comsewogue comes to mind, Mt. Sinai comes to mind, Connetquot, that are -- that are very high up on this idea. And so the simple answer to -- and you asked several questions, is -- the bullying is worse. It was always bullying. And they -- we've gotten way past the sticks and stones, you know, part because that does do damage. Words are more damaging in many ways, it's called relational aggression now. We just have fancier names for it. Relational aggression used to be called the Mean Girl Syndrome where it's character assassination. And that is the -- probably the most malignant form of bullying because it's hard to see, hard to catch, you can -- you could probably accuse a kid of maybe imagining it, you know, or maybe they're just jealous, but it's -- it's groups of girls or guys teaming up to shun or to, you know, to exclude, to completely erase any sense of respect for the kids, you know, that that person may have. So relational aggression is easy to do because of phones and, you know, because of tweeting or subtweeting where you can start a party, have a party, invite everybody to it and make it very clear who's not invited, all out in the public. And that's bullying. But it's -- you can't really nail it down to any one person.

So it is -- it is worse than -- than it was. The good part is these, you know, words are used now very commonly and so I think, you know, whenever you see programs start, it sounds like it, you know, it got worse when really we just started hearing about it more and doing something about it.

My interests came from, you know, Lori Benincasa's and Nancy Hemindinger's mandate that I -- I do peer education, which I'm good at, you know, the group stuff. But I don't have -- I didn't go anywhere for an expertise on this. I -- I wanted to. The national gold standard is a thing called Olweus Bullying Program. They wanted \$4000 to train me and then they would charge the schools several hundred, you know, dollars a month for the paperwork and could implement the program. And we thought that we could do it for free with research and training. So I've been, you know, going to every conference and reading every book and developing it. And it turns out you don't -- you don't have to be the expert of the day. You just have to be a good listener and a, you know, someone that the kids will -- I can tell that they would respond to, someone that gets it.

**LEG. CILMI:**

From -- a whole different line of questioning here, with regard to DASA, how specific are the protocols that schools must follow when they're confronted with a bullying incident, particularly one that involves violence, you know, physical violence of some sort?

**MR. MARTIN:**

You kind of eluded to it, Legislator Cilmi. There -- bullying is on the beginning end of what ends up being violence; domestic violence, you know -- you know, assault. And at the beginning end of it, you know, if it's a bullying incident, the guidance is very clear. And the paper I'm going to leave you is a cover sheet but you'll see by the titles of the guidance that schools, you know, can download on PDF form very clear on what actions have to be taken and what schedule. So it starts with a school -- every school has to have a Dignity Act Coordinator, the go-to person, you know, the chief of staff on this bullying thing. And then that person has to implement -- I'm sorry -- the referral within, I think, it's 24 hours. If something's reported, it has to be followed up with. There has -- and it says very specifically parents must be called, documentation must be made, a meeting must be held where the administrator or assistant administrator is notified and brought in on it and then a decision made what to do. So they're -- they're specifically clear from the State.

Having said that, a lot of schools seem to have taken that very clear guidance and said, "*all right, we'll modify our code of conduct and roll it in*", which is okay to do but it misses the point to keep this out separate and special, in my view, but there'll be -- you know, every school's a little different. And some of them want to roll it into their code of conduct.

**LEG. CILMI:**

I would imagine you've gone through that Act with a fine-tooth comb, you probably know it backwards and forwards.

**MR. MARTIN:**

I do not but I have gone through it with a fine-tooth comb.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Okay. And I'm just wondering how -- if it's strong enough, if it's specific enough. I don't know if my colleagues have had incidences in their district, certainly I've gotten at least a handful of calls over the past couple of years from parents whose children have been bullied in schools, who are unhappy with the way the School Districts have handled those sorts of incidents. In fact, we're going through one now in a district, which I won't name, but -- and in each of these incidences -- actually I shouldn't say each of them, but in some of them the bullying evolved into physical violence.

One of the things that students are told sometimes is that they should eliminate videos from their phones. Like if somebody has a video of something that happened, because I suppose, they don't want those videos -- the school administrators don't want those videos circulating through Facebook or Twitter, whatever. They are told -- the students are told to eliminate the videos. But those videos, may in fact, be evidence for a Police Department or whatever, who's investigating an incident. Is that something you're familiar with? Have you seen that before? Is that spoken to in DASA?

**MR. MARTIN:**

Not specifically. The most successful schools have associated -- had formed a partnership with the local precinct. And when this Dignity Act was implemented, the school attorneys were all brought in, too, you know, how do you -- how do you make that partnership, keep confidentiality, you know, not pick on one group, but, you know, implement this guidance with teeth and -- and it breaks my heart to hear exactly what you said. It's not uncommon to have a great guidance in place and still see this happen and kids, you know, not wanting to go to school and the parents are like, *I thought there was a law that's supposed to stop this* and sometimes --

**LEG. CILMI:**

And sometimes the schools will say -- sometimes the schools will say "*well, we complied with the DASA requirements.*"

**MR. MARTIN:**

Right, right.

**LEG. CILMI:**

And then -- and from what I've seen, that may not be enough; or to the average person who's looking from the outside in, you know, the conclusion is, you know, but it's not enough. You know. *My kid is still in the school, my kid is still being bullied. Throw the bullies out. Why can't you suspend or, you know, whatever, arrest, put in jail, you know, why is this not an assault, you know, in whatever degree that would generate some sort of significant action? Why does the school board do nothing about it?* You know, these are some of the questions that -- that we hear.

**MR. MARTIN:**

I do too. And I don't have a great answer except to say it's fairly -- fairly new, you know, implemented in 2012, addended in 2013. The schools are becoming a little more sophisticated at understanding that. The good part about this guidance is if it's documented, then they're -- they're held accountable, there'll be a written record of what they did or didn't do and lawsuits can abound.

The -- what's become easier is to define what is harassment and assault and -- and bring charges against kids. And that's done more than you hear about. I did discover that. You know, that schools have a lot -- seem to have a lot more police involvement than -- than you would think, you know, looking at any school or going passed it or being a parent. But it's kept, you know -- you know, somewhat private. And the schools do sometimes take a hit that they're not doing anything when really they're -- they're -- they're maxing out all their options.

The reason that Peer Ed seems to be, by all the research and my anecdotal experience, the best way to go is because, as you said, also eloquently, the kids know what's going on. They know who's who -- they know who -- you know, who to look out for, who's trouble. And when you get a parent like that that could tell or, you know, or recommend that their son or daughter who's in this kind of -- you know, every night they go through it, the kid doesn't want to go to school the next day, if they could be referred to a group like this, when your -- *you know, honey, you could -- you join the Peer Education group, you know, find Mr. Martin from the Health Department, find the code advisor, the Dignity Act Coordinator, go on the website, find out who that is and I want you to join that group because you're going to have a whole group with you then.* That's the idea. I mean, you know, it's not the, you know, West Side Story and the Jets versus -- but, we are a group of kids that know each other now from all levels of intellectual prowess and -- and gay and straight. And -- and they're -- they -- they are working it, you know, they're kind of like the Guardian Angels that walk the hallway without officially having a cap.

You know, and so I think that is -- the best answer I can give is that, you know, we're empowering the kids to do what these schools, even with a great law, cannot get to.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Madam Chair, I have one last question, I know I've taken a lot of time. I could probably talk for another hour about this, but I won't. Simple question, I think. Does DASA apply across the academic spectrum in terms of public schools, private schools, parochial schools, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera?

**MR. MARTIN:**

Yes.

**LEG. CILMI:**

And does the work that you do -- are you -- are you doing that work exclusively in public schools? Are you also going to the private schools?

**MR. MARTIN:**

I go to public and private. I go to whatever schools will have me to do my general work, HIV and AIDS. And our unit has tobacco cessation and -- and the age of computer. And we go into -- from Saint John's to Saint Anthony's to -- to every public school to BOCES. So the -- the goal is start somewhere, and we did, and keep spreading it. My worry is that I'll be, I'm one person, and eventually I'll be, you know, doing two schools in a day, sometimes during the day and sometimes not and modifying it. What I'm thrilled at is that Commack wants to bring me in three-days-a-week to plug into the gym classes so that all freshman seminar kids get this. And then just do it in 11 weeks. Not even go into the classrooms. I'm not going to be training them for Peer Ed. I'm going to be training them to -- to be upstanders and they go back into -- and pass it on.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Fortunately, there are lots of different people that are talking about this and learning about it. And we certainly appreciate the work that you're doing. So, thank you.

**MR. MARTIN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

And, again, I also want to mention that, you know, having been on a school board and understanding the -- the inner workings of school districts, you know, a lot of parents don't hear everything. And, you know what? And there -- there's a confidentiality issue within -- especially relating to children. But there is also the -- we have to focus on getting the word out when it comes to issues that we can get the word out. That it's legally okay -- and I think, with the Dignity Act the State now mandates and requires schools to be proactive. And I think this is what's important. Because I remember, even as a parent prior to being on the school board, and I had asked the school district to reduce their use of pesticides. And I was told that unless it's mandated, they don't have to do anything, you know, I won't say who said that to me, but it was someone in an authoritative position. And it's frustrating because, you know, as a parent you want your kids to be in the best place, safest place possible.

And it's such good news to hear that this legislation is a mandate to schools. And as a County we are taking this and -- and using this to the betterment of our, you know, for our communities. Legislator Martinez has a question for you.

**LEG. MARTINEZ:**

Well, it's more a comment also for Legislator Cilmi. Schools are -- coming from being an educator for 14 years and still am and will be forever, it's very difficult for a school, especially budget cuts, counselors, you know, so it becomes very difficult really targeting this issue and they do the best that they can.

And kids do know it all. You go to that child and they know who the bully is. And the unfortunate part, too, but also the fortunate is you still have to protect the bully himself as well or herself. So it becomes very gray and shady because you want to protect those who are being victimized but at the same time we need to protect the one who is doing it. And the parents have all the right to press charges whether valid or not. They are able to go to the precincts and they're able to make that call themselves.

But in terms of DASA legislation, it has to be reported to the State. So at the end of year it goes up to the State, all incidents, as soon as a child says, "*I've been bullied*," you need to take that -- whether serious or not, you need to document everything.

And then you speak to the child, you speak to the children and see what -- what happened. And it could have been "*she looked at me the wrong way.*" And I know, John, thank you for everything and I know you said, sometimes you have to make that difference and make sure the child knows what's the difference between harassment and not because sometimes they do take it where *she just looked at me the wrong way*, but you need to take that time to sit down with them and really see what they're feeling. And it could just be also things that are going on at home and then it comes into the schools. And so you have different facets that you have to look at before making that -- informed decisions.

And when I saw those videos, to me, I've seen it. I've seen it with the children that I've worked with and it irates me so, I mean, to the point that it just -- and to me when I've dealt with a child who has either been bullied or the bully -- I was a DASA coordinator along with my other administrators, fellow administrators, and we took it to wherever we needed to take it, just to make sure that that child never did it again. But it's tough because when you have -- you know, when you come from a school that is over 1,000 students and -- and you have to make sure that every single child is safe, it's tough when you don't have the -- the staff to help you out. And it's so unfortunate that schools have to be charged to have bully programs in their schools. And we would do programs -- at least once a month, we do a bully program just to let the kids know: Cyberbullying, sexting, okay, which is another thing. It -- it's something that we need to educate our children. And coming from the middle school level right now, you see it more than you do see it at the high school. At the high school they're more, *I know who I am, don't mess with* -- you know, either/or. But when they're children between the ages of 11 and 13 they're just so fragile that words will break their bones because they're just so young.

And -- but I thank you for everything that you're doing. And this is dear to me because I have dealt with it, with children who have been bullied. And I hope that you go into more schools and I hope to see you in the 9th district as well, so -- but thank you for everything.

**MR. MARTIN:**

My pleasure. Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Very good. Legislator Trotta has a question for you.

**LEG. TROTTA:**

How old are the kids you are teaching?

**MR. MARTIN:**

High schools, right now, I'm starting in secondary schools. That's what this program was written for. Oh, 15 to 18.

**LEG. TROTTA:**

I'm a neophyte in this, I mean, is it better to teach them when they're younger, you know, when they're seven, eight or nine?

**MR. MARTIN:**

Legislator Martinez is absolutely right, bullying peaks in the middle school years but it doesn't mean that -- well, we actually -- we changed the word. We don't call it bullying and victimization; we call it aggression and targeting because we play both roles in our lives, every one of us, at different times, you know, we've been more aggressive than we should have been and we've been the target of someone's aggression. And that's different than being, you know, in a conflict where you're being picked on or it's good old, you know, old fashioned fun.

The bullying peaks in middle school so you're absolutely right, Legislator Trotta, the -- the key would

be to train them. So what -- what Lori Benincasa, my boss, taught and -- and all the studies bear it out is train the high schoolers to go into the middle school. The middle school kids will react way differently from someone from their high school, a big kid that's coming down to their level to talk about that this high school's going to be different and -- and that, you know, and, they run it different and they don't expect bullying, rather than hear it from someone, you know, that's older, like me. And so I'm training these high schoolers specifically to go into middle school and elementary. It's a benefit that they get to go into their peers in the 9th grade, that's where they're starting. But we're doing that more for practice, you know, for them, you know, to get -- to get their, you know, their feet wet before they go into the middle school. That's a great question.

**LEG. TROTTA:**

I'm assuming the school itself has other programs. This just supplements it or --

**MR. MARTIN:**

Every school's different. The schools that I've gone to were really thrilled to have this because that is their -- their answer to the State "*what are you doing?*" But as Legislator Martinez says, schools have been really clever and ingenious in some levels at -- at how they plug it in. Many schools do it through the Health Class. The -- school is asking the Health teacher to plug in a session, you know, on cyberbullying, texting, sexting. There's other schools like West Bab and those that are progressive thinkers that have monthly or bimonthly reminders on the announcements, posters on the wall and assemblies that, you know, talk about it. It sounds like your school did that, too.

**LEG. TROTTA:**

Do you ever, like, have all the teachers come to you? Like you can do 50 schools in one shot? Like, if you taught the teachers to do this?

**MR. MARTIN:**

That's -- that's my boss's next thought for us is that we do train the trainer.

**LEG. TROTTA:**

You'll be -- well, going around the schools will take you forever. But if you have a symposium somewhere and have every school district come to you.

**MR. MARTIN:**

The only way I've been able to reach the -- I love -- that idea is wonderful. Hard to do to get all the teachers in the summer. If you do it during the school year, hard to do it because the teachers have to have substitutes and -- and be paid. And so what we did in the past is have teen empowerment conferences where we had maybe seven or eight schools with their kids and their advisors come in; and then we would train them, you know, to do things like the Health Smart Program, or, you know, Health Ed curriculum. I would love to gather everybody. That would be a -- we'll rent Nassau Coliseum and do it all in one big bunch. I love that kind of thinking, yes, that's -- that's the goal is to train the trainer, get other people to do this with me.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Well, it sounds like we have a lot of work to do. And, I think, we're very fortunate to have you and the Health Department staff working on this. And, again, it just seems the issue with the bully wanting control, wanting power and the person being bullied having the confidence to stand up, you know, that -- that's what it -- just seems to be the -- the general overview. And we need to be here to help both. The person who bullies, there's something wrong, you know, and the person being bullied. And then you have the other issues of, you know, drugs and -- and the hormones with the middle school, ADD and other mental illnesses. There's so much that goes on within our schools. And it's good to know that our Health Department here is there to help them especially with these issues.

So, I don't think we have any more questions. Thank you so much for coming here for this -- - for

this Committee meeting. And we look forward to working with you and we're going to continue on with our agenda.

**MR. MARTIN:**

Thank you. Do you want me to leave these with your --

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

That would be -- that would be great. Amy, you want to go and grab that.

**MR. MARTIN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

All right. We're going to move to -- we have no Tabled Resolutions. We're going to go to Introductory Resolutions.

### **INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**

We have **IR 1189 - Accepting and appropriating a grant award from the State University of New York, for a Community College Workforce Development Training Program for College Resources for Employer-Supported Training (CREST), 84% reimbursed by State funds at Suffolk County Community College. (Co. Exec.)** I'll make a motion to approve. I need a second.

**LEG. MARTINEZ:**

Second.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Okay. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **APPROVED (VOTE: 5-0)**

**IR 1190 - Accepting and appropriating a grant award from the State University of New York, for a Community College Workforce Development Training Program for Sea Tow Services, International, 88% reimbursed by State funds at Suffolk County Community College. (Co. Exec.)** I'll make a motion to approve.

**LEG. MARTINEZ:**

Second.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **APPROVED (VOTE: 5-0)**

**IR 1198 - Directing the Department of Information Technology, in conjunction with the Department of Health Services and the Suffolk County Police Department, to develop and publish a website dedicated to bullying prevention and awareness. (Anker)** I will make a motion to approve.

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

Second.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Second. All in favor?

**LEG. CILMI:**

On the motion.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

On the motion.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Just I guess to -- to Madam Chair as -- as the sponsor, is this -- what's -- or to Budget Review, through the Chair if I could, the fiscal impact of -- of this? And do we have the resources to actually do this? And, I guess, as part of that question to the Chair, well, let me ask -- let me ask Budget Review first and then --

**MR. PERNICE:**

So the resolution doesn't provide any funding or additional resources so it assumes that it'll be done with existing resources. The Police Department and the Department of Health Services, which you've just seen has -- has pretty much the information that they're required to provide to DOIT to put the website up. You know, it's seems like they could probably do it in-house.

**LEG. CILMI:**

To the Chair, what do you envision the website accomplishing exactly?

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

So this website will basically be created by the IT Department. And I've met with them and it's a very doable project. The Health Department will provide information as well as the Police Department. There are many projects relating to bullying awareness going on within Suffolk County. And there's a big disconnect. And I'm hoping that this website will connect all those components and projects to allow an awareness of really what's going on. And we're going to have, you know, buttons for students, the teachers and the parents. So if you're one of the above, you can click on that and you can -- you can get those resources. There's links to not-for-profits including Get.A.Voice and also New York Families Against Bullying and -- and, like I said, in Mt. Sinai, for some reason we have a lot of local advocates. And I've met with many constituents so I think it'll be -- it'll be a good -- a good investment for the County to provide this website.

**LEG. CILMI:**

I haven't done the research. There has to be a number of anti-bullying resources available online for parents, for students, etcetera, already. Maybe you've looked at that, I don't know. I'd be curious to know if you have looked at that, if it's just -- if it's just the disconnect that you're describing that you think your -- that this website will be able to fix; or if there are other deficiencies in some of those other resources that -- that you think this -- this website should supplement.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

So one of the biggest deficiencies is that most parents don't know that schools are mandated to have a Dignity Act Coordinator. So this website will provide that to-go person. Right there, click on, find out what district you're in. And if your child is being bullied, you know that person in that school district is responsible to help your child. Right now that's not available. Nassau County has that available. If you go onto Nassau County's bullying website, there's some great information on there. And I actually was hoping to -- to work with them but they do things just a little differently. This site, again, will focus on Suffolk County.

**LEG. CILMI:**

But you expect -- it sounds like you're impressed by the Nassau site and maybe you're hoping to model Suffolk's site to some extent after the Nassau site?

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Yes, that's correct.

**LEG. CILMI:**

I'll have a look at that after -- after our meeting.

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As part of the DASA requirements, there's no responsibility on the part of school districts to -- to in any way make public the name of the -- of the -- whoever the DASA coordinator is?

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

John, would you mind coming back up here?

**LEG. CILMI:**

I'm sorry.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Yeah, we're going to get you -- yeah, John's been working on this for, you know, since, I guess, the legislation has come out. And, honestly, I was not aware, I mean, I'm a mother of three kids, I was on the school board. Here I am Chair of the Education for the County and I was not aware of the facts dealing with this legislation. So go ahead, Legislator Cilmi.

**MR. MARTIN:**

The guidance is not clear on how the schools go about it. There is a mandate that they have to make public to the community that the Dignity Act is, you know, in progress in the school and that there's a contact person. And when I asked, every school that I went into, teachers, kids, "so who's your DAC?" Thinking that this was going to be a -- they didn't know.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Well, to be fair --

**MR. MARTIN:**

And when you go on the websites. I'm sorry, I cut you off.

**LEG. CILMI:**

To be fair, 60% of the people in the County probably don't know who their County Legislators are, so. **(\*Laughter\*)** And I may be -- I may be generous with that 60%.

**MR. MARTIN:**

The disappointment I found is when we were talking about, *could this website, could we steal the best of the Nassau and then do it better*, we wanted a list of Dignity Act Coordinators. But not every person, every name and every number that might change every month, just the coordinator for the district would be fine. My task was to go on every website in every school district, 72, whatever it is and find it. There's about a dozen schools that have bullying or DASA on their homepage. And the rest of the schools it's buried in either school board minutes; or some don't have that name. So this website, having a clearinghouse, a go-to spot for local, you know, yes, there's StopBullying.gov and all those big websites, this is Suffolk County's go-to place. And it would be my intention to have every peer educator put this on a poster and teach it to every kid and bring it home to every parent. This is our clearinghouse for where -- how you handle Dignity Act violations in Suffolk.

**LEG. CILMI:**

So do you see this as a -- as just a, you know, a page with maybe a couple of links on it? Or do you see this as a fully-developed separately -- separately hosted website?

**MR. MARTIN:**

I --

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

That's what this legislation's about. It's to coordinate with what you guys have, your information, with our IT Department. Probably a little bigger than just a homepage and a couple of things. I mean, it'll -- you know, we need to provide the information of what exactly is the Dignity Act and let -- and we're going to list the coordinators.

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Also our Police Department is working on, you know, they go into schools. Our Youth Bureau in the Labor Department, they have programs, they have a poster contest. It's just basically to get the word out. And then, of course, there's these local and national organizations so but it is doable by the IT, we checked.

**MR. MARTIN:**

We don't want to repeat, you know, all the data that's out there. This is not a research page. This is very, very specific.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Specific and simple.

**MR. MARTIN:**

You know, school -- educators, parents, teachers, a yes button, if you need the help. And when you go to these pages, the interactive page would be news, you know, the Sheriff's Department runs a really great Cyberbullying Program. The schools don't know who to call necessarily so that -- that program will be on it, ours would be on it, CAPS, you know, and Nassau would be on it, the programs in Mt. Sinai would be on it as -- as a resource for the teachers, a clearinghouse for, you know, what's up. If there's a conference -- if we can implement Legislator Trotta's idea and have every teacher come to this training that we're going to, you know, have kindly funded by the Legislature, we would announce it there. And then we would, you know, the schools would go there and -- and be able to, you know, know what's happening locally.

**LEG. CILMI:**

There's no one from IT here, Madam Chair?

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Tom's here.

**LEG. CILMI:**

I know there is -- those are my favorite two words: Opportunity cost. But if they can put this together in half-an-hour, well, it's obviously worth it.

**MR. VAUGHN:**

Thank you very much, Legislator Cilmi. So I don't know if they could put this together in a half-an-hour and I'm not positive if that would be realistic. But the bill does allow for them to have until August to put the website together. The Health Department and IT spoke this morning. And everybody feels comfortable with the timeline given and the ability to maintain such a website.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Okay, thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Legislator Martinez.

**LEG. MARTINEZ:**

Legislator Cilmi, this is for you as well. Just so you know, according to DASA guidelines, every school should have posted who their DASA coordinators are. Posted. So when you do go into a school, it should be posted where -- either in the front office, guidance, as soon as you walk into a building, your coordinator should be posted of who they are.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Okay, thank you.

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**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Any more questions? Okay, we will continue. Thank you. So we were -- we had a motion. I made the motion. It was seconded by Lou. Okay. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0)**

**IR 1270 - Adopting Local Law No. -2014, A Local Law to authorize tobacco-free policy for Suffolk County Community College. (Spencer)** I'll make a motion to approve. Oh, I'm sorry, okay. This needs to be tabled for a Public Hearing. I'll make a motion to table.

**LEG. MARTINEZ:**

Second.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Okay. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0)**

We have no further business, I will adjourn this meeting.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 11:02 AM  
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**