



May 5, 2011

New York City Council
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Dear Council Member,

We are writing to you on behalf of Citizens' Committee for Children's (CCC) YouthAction Program, which is comprised of high school students from New York City's public and private schools. CCC is a sixty-seven-year old child advocacy organization that seeks to ensure that every child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. Since 1999, YouthAction NYC has introduced aspiring young leaders to civic engagement and advocacy opportunities. YouthAction Members (YAMs) meet once a week after school to analyze social policies, current events, and specific community issues, and to develop policy and budgetary recommendations to improve life in New York City. YAMs execute advocacy campaigns and meet with elected and appointed officials in Albany and at City Hall.

Throughout the 2010-2011 school year, we YAMs addressed the issue of bullying. Through our research, we discovered that 1 out of 4 kids is bullied. Recently, bullying in schools, where there are not enough rules and regulations to tackle this problem, has become pervasive. Bullying is not only happening in person, but it is also occurring over the Internet. With sites such as Facebook, cyber bullying has become even easier. Much of this bullying is in the form of bias-related harassment. Many students are bullied based on their race, sexual orientation, gender, or religion. Bullying and bias-related harassment can cause depression or even suicidal thoughts, especially in teenagers. We believe that the New York City Council can do more to prevent bias-related harassment and educate students and teachers of the serious consequences.

Our research culminated with our involvement in Youth*S.P.E.A.K.* (on **S**afety, **P**eace, **E**quality, **A**ctivism, and **K**nowledge). We partnered with members of the Leave Out Violence (LOVE) program to create this weeklong peace awareness campaign put on for youth, by youth. Events involved visual art and photography exhibits, poetry and spoken word performances, and activities and discussions on how youth can help make homes, schools, and communities' safer and better places for everyone. Please find enclosed the Anti-Violence Toolkit that we created for the participants of Youth*S.P.E.A.K.*

Citizens Committee for Children's YouthAction members support Int. No. 363, the Local Law to amend the New York City charter and the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the commission on human rights to educate the public on various types of

bias-related harassment. We appreciate the opportunity to share our position on such an important issue, and we urge the City Council to actively seek out the voices of young people by creating opportunities for them to participate in the development of programs related to this bill.

Thank you for recognizing the need for better policies regarding bias-related harassment. We look forward to seeing this bill passed into law.

Sincerely,

YouthAction Members
Citizens' Committee for Children
YouthAction NYC