

## ***Youth Anti-Bullying Task Force***

### ***ZOOM Video Conference, 6:00 p.m. 3/31/2020***

**Members Present:** *Riley Meckley, Gianna Tantillo, Adrianna Romeo, Emily Greico, Devin Moore*

**Others Present:** *Joe Salamone, Derek Stein.*

The meeting opened with Derek Stein stating that they had heard back from the Department of Information Technology regarding the Youth Anti-Bullying App the week before the Coronavirus quarantine had gone into effect, during this time, a meeting was going to be scheduled the week of March 16<sup>th</sup>, but due to the outbreak and the effective shutdown of the Legislature, that was delayed. In addition, Derek Stein stated he believes that the Department of Information Technology is currently busy setting up Suffolk County's alert system for COVID-19 and operating an associated mobile app that they put together, so he expected that they may be unable to develop the app, but will look to set up a Zoom interview with Will Thurman from the Department of Information Technology at a later date.

Derek Stein then spoke about the need to extend the Task Force's deadline in order to give the Task Force more time to complete its work. He stated he will ask Presiding Officer Calarco to put forward a resolution extending the Task Force through the end of August, in order for the Task Force to still be able to present its' findings during either the General Meeting on July 21<sup>st</sup>, or during the Committee week of July 13<sup>th</sup>. He stated most likely the Task Force would fall under the Education and Labor Committee, so if a presentation would be needed then, the Task Force could present on Wednesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>.

Derek Stein suggested having one meeting before the week of July 13<sup>th</sup>, and possibly one in August to wrap up the Task Force and tie up any loose ends. Meetings were scheduled for Thursday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, August 13<sup>th</sup>. Riley Meckley asked if the Task Force would be presenting to the Legislature directly, and if they would be able to ask questions. Derek Stein replied that it would be reading off the report, but the Legislators would be able to ask questions about specific recommendations. Joe Salamone added that it largely depends on the number of recommendations the Task Force puts forward, if they have more they may be less likely to ask questions about a single item.

Joe Salamone then asked the members to recall from their last meeting some of the topics that were discussed, such as Gay Straight Alliances often including bullying clubs, and how one of the suggestions at the last meeting was to make them separate clubs. He noted that this item would already be something people would notice as there is a clear budget concern with paying teachers extra to serve as advisors, but that also can be why innovative solutions to that problem spoken about at the last meeting would be helpful. Adrianna Romeo mentioned that at her school the peer ambassadors are chosen by other students, which has led to the organization becoming simply a popularity contest, where the students receive an award but generally aren't active as

leaders or preventing bullying. Gianna Tantillo mentioned that at her school they have to be recommended by a teacher first, while Riley Meckley added that her school also has faculty review honorees. Devin Moore added that the Hart group at his school is overseen by teachers. Joe Salamone asked if there was a way for students to have their honors removed. Adrianna Romeo replied that most of the students are only active in it for the first month or so of the year, and she didn't think the program had any way of removing students. She noted that there is an Anti-Bias Committee at her school where the members are recommended by teachers and approved by faculty.

Joe Salamone mentioned that the recommendations do not have to just be at the County level, and that they could be for the State and School Districts faculty themselves. Joe Salamone asked what recommendations would the Task Force make for non-profit organizations. Gianna Tantillo mentioned that one idea would be to make sure that schools have local resources available to new students, and noted that non-profits could provide that if schools could not. Adrianna Romeo agreed, and noted a lot of people don't know about what resources are already available. Joe Salamone replied that it wouldn't be much work for school Social Workers to compile a list of local resources, and that the only cost would be that of printing them out. Riley Meckley added that she sees a number of non-profit organizations that provide resources, and thought broadly that they do a good job.

Joe Salamone then asked what would be the recommendations for the members own peers. Riley Meckley replied simply to be nice to each other, Emily Greico responded that you should treat someone the way you would want to be treated. Devin Moore noted that this is part of what he is trying to do with his presentations, such as the one he gave at Park Avenue Elementary School in Amityville, where he was able to present about bullying to younger students who were able to relate to him. Gianna Tantillo suggested that one thing would be to have more relatable presenters, since she has probably seen the same presentation multiple times. Joe Salamone replied that shows he has never been to their school, and that their presentations are only to a single class at a time, and not to a whole auditorium. He then suggested that could be a recommendation, for schools to have more "stand-in" school assemblies instead of the common once-a-year bullying assemblies in the gym, and that non-profits should shift towards that model. Emily Greico stated that many of the problems she has heard about bullying since joining the Task Force don't apply to her school, as she feels like none of these things happen at her school, and that they do not have a bullying problem. Derek Stein noted that one thing then would be to look at the successes at Bayport-Blue Point schools and see how they could be applied to other school districts. Joe Salamone agreed, as the lessons learned could then be used as recommendations to the other School Districts on Long Island.

Derek Stein asked if the Task Force would want to do another video conference again in April, the Task Force ultimately agreed to move up the next meeting one week to Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Derek Stein, Legislative Aide to Presiding Officer Robert Calarco.