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The Dignity for All Students Act, which would protect LGBT students from bullying and harassment in schools, passed the New York state senate Tuesday evening after years of effort. Governor David Paterson is expected to sign the bill into law, which would mark the first time gender identity and expression are included in state law.

Senators approved DASA by a bipartisan vote of 58-3 late Tuesday night after some 90 minutes of speeches. All three no votes came from Republicans.

The assembly passed the bill in May for the ninth time since 2002.

According to the Empire State Pride Agenda, the statewide LGBT advocacy group, "The Dignity bill creates tools for school administrators, teachers, parents and students to address bullying and bias-related behavior of all kinds that interfere with student safety and learning. Key provisions include: developing rules to prevent and respond to discriminatory harassment and hate violence; establishing teacher, staff and administrative training guidelines; incorporating discrimination awareness into civility and character education curricula; and required reporting of incidents of bias harassment to the State Education Department."

DASA marks the first time gender identity and expression would be included in New York state law. The approval arrives two weeks after a state senate committee rejected the Gender Expression Non-discrimination Act, which would add gender identity and expression to state human rights laws.

State senator Thomas Duane, the chief DASA sponsor in the senate, will hold a press conference Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. to discuss the victory. Tune into the New York state senate channel or watch the video below.

New York state assemblymember Daniel O'Donnell, who sponsored DASA in the assembly, said in a news release Tuesday, "The bill's enactment will be a major victory for the LGBT community. When fully implemented, DASA will afford all public school students an environment free of harassment and discrimination. The law will cover but is not limited to, the broadest categories of students who are the victims of bullying based on actual or perceived race, color,

weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex.?

New York City Council speaker Christine Quinn, who advocated strongly for DASA, released a statement late Tuesday that recognized the long drive to pass the bill.

"I want to thank the lead sponsors of this bill - Senator Thomas Duane and Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell - for their tireless leadership on this important legislation," she said. "I applaud Senate Majority Leader John Sampson and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver for their leadership on this issue in Albany. I also thank the advocates who worked for so many years to reach this point, as well as the thousands of New Yorkers who called, wrote and met with their Senators about this bill, year after year."

Jun. 23, 2010

News Article

http://www.advocate.com/News/Daily_News/2010/06/23/Antibully... [1]

The Advocate

Julie Bolcer

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