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For Immediate Release
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MARK S. WEPRIN AND LEWIS A. FIDLER'S ANTI-CYBERBULLYING BILL SIGNED INTO LAW

New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg signed into law a bill by Council Member Mark S. Weprin and Council Member Lewis A. Fidler that alters the human rights law to facilitate instruction on bias-related harassment, especially cyberbullying. There has been a disturbing number of incidents in recent years in which young people were victims of bullying via internet or electronic devices. Cyberbullying education aims to combat that trend.

“Too many children and teens have suffered for no good reason,” said Council Member Mark S. Weprin. “If we want our children to grow up in a nurturing and compassionate society, there is absolutely no place for cyberbullying.”

Unfortunately, taunting and harassment have always been prevalent among youth. In recent years, though, the widespread presence of internet access, mobile telephones, and other electronic devices has facilitated an environment in which schoolyard teasing can escalate into an even more serious and pervasive problem as cyberbullying infiltrates internet messaging, chat rooms, social networking websites, email, and text messaging. In a few cases, the harassment has become so severe that young people have chosen to end their lives. These stories are tragic examples of the critical need to address cyberbullying.

Rachel Mayo of Little Neck, Queens, who recently finished her first year at Brandeis University, initially contacted Council Member Mark S. Weprin about cyberbullying last year when she was a student at Townsend Harris High School in Queens. Rachel conducted an in-depth study of cyberbullying among local high school students. Her impressive report concluded that cyberbullying has become a pervasive and insidious problem among our youth and that existing anti-bullying programs do not specifically address cyberbullying. Impressed by the seriousness of Rachel's report and its conclusions, Council Member Weprin moved to pursue legislative

action. He worked in concert with Council Member Lewis A. Fidler, who was the lead sponsor of the measure, and with Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn, to get the bill passed.

The measure authorizes the New York City Human Rights Commission (HRC) to conduct education on cyberbullying through schools, libraries, and government agencies. In accordance with the mission of the HRC, the focus will be on bias-related harassment, which has become far too commonplace among today's youth. In addition to deterring harassment, the education program will assist young people in recognizing cyberbullying so that it can be addressed before it is too late.

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Council Member Peter F. Vallone, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Council Member Mark S. Weprin, Council Member Lewis A. Fidler, Rachel Mayo