

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Senator Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today reintroduced the Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Act, legislation that for the first time would require colleges and universities to have in place anti-harassment policies. The bills, introduced separately in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, also would provide funding for schools to establish or expand programs to prevent harassment of students.

“The tragic impact of bullying on college campuses has damaged too many young adults, and it is time for our colleges to put policies on the books that would protect students from harassment,” Lautenberg said. “While there is no way to eliminate the cruelty that some students choose to inflict on their peers, there should be a clear code of conduct that prohibits harassment. It is vitally important that all students have the opportunity to learn in a safe and secure environment.”

“It is not enough simply to denounce cruelty, bullying, and harassment. We must create meaningful policies to bar this toxic behavior from our college campuses,” Holt said. “I thank Tyler’s family for their inspiring efforts to end bullying and, through their work with Rutgers, to promote conversations and research about preventing harassment.”

The legislation is named in honor of Tyler Clementi, an 18-year-old freshman at Rutgers University who took his life in 2010 after his roommate and another student harassed him and violated his privacy over the Internet.

Holt announced the legislation’s reintroduction at an event at Rutgers University to launch the Tyler Clementi Center, a collaborative effort between Rutgers and the Tyler Clementi Foundation that will offer lectures, symposia, and seminars on topics including the impact of technologies on youth and emerging adults, especially social media, cyber-bullying, and privacy.

Lautenberg’s and Holt’s legislation would require colleges and universities that receive federal student aid to have in place a policy that prohibits harassment of students based on their actual or perceived race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religion. Schools would be required to distribute that policy to all students, along with information about the procedure to follow should an incident of harassment occur, and notify students of counseling, mental health, and other services available to victims or perpetrators of harassment.

The legislation also would require schools to recognize cyberbullying as a form of harassment and it would create a new grant program at the U.S. Department of Education to help colleges and universities establish programs to prevent harassment of students.

The bill is supported by the Human Rights Campaign; the National Women's Law Center; the Anti-Defamation League; the Trevor Project; the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN); People For the American Way; and Campus Pride.