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### **Thomas Calls for a Bully-Free DC**

*Press Conference Highlights the Personal Stories of Young People Victimized by Bullying*

**Washington, DC**—Ward 5 Councilmember Harry Thomas, Jr., an active advocate for advancing anti-bullying programs and policies in the District of Columbia, held a press conference on Thursday, April 21, 2011 to promote Bill 19-11, “The Bullying and Intimidation Prevention Act of 2011,” and “Bully Free DC,” an initiative to end bullying in the District. He was joined by his colleagues At-Large Councilmember Sekou Biddle, Ward 4 Councilmember Muriel Bowser, and Ward 8 Councilmember Yvette Alexander, as well as a host of students, educators, and advocates from the more than 20 organizations that comprise the DC Safe Schools Coalition. Mayor Vincent Gray also proclaimed April 21, 2011 “Bully Free DC Day” to demonstrate his commitment to fostering an environment where all children are able to learn and feel safe.

Bill 19-11—which Councilmember Thomas co-introduced with colleagues Chairman Kwame Brown, At-Large Councilmember Michael Brown, and Ward 1 Councilmember Jim Graham—calls for the establishment of policies within the District of Columbia Public Schools, District of Columbia Public Charter Schools, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the District of Columbia Public Library, and the University of the District of Columbia to prohibit harassment, intimidation, and bullying, including by means of electronic communication. The bill also calls for establishment of bullying prevention programs in the respective agencies. A hearing on the bill is scheduled for Monday, May 2, 2011.

Myriad statistics demonstrate the significant, adverse consequences that result from bullying. An estimated 160,000 students miss school every day in response to bullying. Nationwide, two-thirds of high school students report that they have been verbally or physically harassed or assaulted in the past year at school. More than one third of public school students and half of teachers report that bullying and harassment are serious problems in their schools. Several of the young people participating in the press conference shared their personal stories of being bullied and the toll it took on them, including contemplating suicide and running away to escape harassment.

"We need to move forward with adopting policies so that our young people are safe and secure from bullying and intimidation whether at school or at play," stated Councilmember Thomas. "I remain committed to ensuring that B19-11 becomes law."



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