



2015 Update from the New York State Assembly EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Carl E. Heastie, Speaker • Catherine Nolan, Chairwoman

Dear Friends:

The 2015 legislative session was an important one for education. The Assembly Majority fought and achieved increased education funding; specifically, a \$1.3 billion increase in direct support to public schools, the biggest increase in funding since 2009. This funding was long overdue and will help schools across the state serve their students more effectively. I am also pleased to report that we were able to allocate an additional \$30 million to building universal pre-k outside of New York City, continuing the Assembly's progress toward providing everyone with access to quality pre-k programs.

As a state, we continue to grapple with important issues like teacher evaluation, testing and curriculum changes. After significant concern from the Assembly, both the State Education Department and Governor Cuomo are seeking to make changes to the Common Core and to state testing. I urge everyone to make their voices heard and to visit <http://www.nysed.gov/aimhighny> and <https://www.ny.gov/programs/common-core-task-force> to express their thoughts, opinions and suggestions on this important topic. Public input is vital to creating the change that is needed, just as it was crucial to the push that led to these re-examinations in the first place. As a member of Governor Cuomo's Common Core Task Force I look forward to hearing from you and pushing for the changes that I and the Assembly believe are necessary. In the meanwhile, I and my colleagues will continue the fight for adequate support to our public schools; I am grateful for their support and the support of Speaker Carl Heastie as we navigate these very difficult issues.

Sincerely,

Catherine Nolan
Chairwoman

School Discipline Legislation

For the past several months, I have worked closely with the New York State Permanent Commission on Justice for Children on legislation regarding school discipline and suspension. The Commission, headed by former New York State Chief Judge Judith Kaye, has spent the last few years holding summits, consulting experts and developing research on this important topic, and I was proud to introduce legislation based off of their findings. Assembly Bill A.8396 will update and modify state law regarding the content, creation and distribution of school Codes of

Conduct; create a uniform process for short and long term suspensions; and direct the State Education Department to provide school districts with guidance and oversight for implementing these new laws. The goal of the legislation is to reduce the number of suspensions (and therefore the amount of time children spend outside the classroom, not learning) while still addressing misbehavior in a productive way and helping school districts create a safe, nurturing and respectful environment for all students.



Significant Legislation Passed by the Committee in 2015

A1024A Gunther -- Requires the Board of Regents to provide a live webcast of their meetings

A1251 Nolan (MS) -- Relates to siting requirements for the New York city school construction authority's leasing program

A2149 Kim (MS) -- Establishes the Asian Lunar New Year day as a school holiday for all city school districts of one million or more with an Asian population of 7.5% or more

A2781A Nolan (MS) -- Relates to certain contracts regarding bus drivers and bus driver's assistants

A2921 Nolan (MS) -- Relates to meetings and absences of the Board of Regents

A3053 Fahy (MS) -- Relates to the form and content of designating petitions for the office of Board of Education member for the city school district of the city of Albany

A3547 Nolan -- Relates to the effectiveness of provisions relating to BOCES intermediate districts

A3880 Nolan (MS) -- Requires the Commissioner of Education to survey, examine and report about school district compliance with physical education instruction requirements in elementary grades in public schools

A5031 Galef (MS) -- Relates to the information which must be included on applications for absentee ballots for school district elections

A5355A Jaffee (MS) -- Authorizes the Commissioner of Education to appoint a state monitor to oversee the East Ramapo Central School District and establishes the powers and duties of the state monitor

A5953 Magee -- Makes permanent certain provisions of law relating to bus maintenance contracts for the Madison-Oneida Board of Cooperative Educational Services

A6091A Johns -- Relates to legalizing, validating, ratifying and confirming a transportation contract of the Fairport Central School District

A6333 Pretlow (MS) -- Authorizes the Yonkers City School District to require certain minors who are five years of age to attend kindergarten

A6489 DiPietro -- Relates to legalizing, validating, ratifying and confirming a transportation contract of the Perry Central School District

A6600 Nolan -- Relates to fingerprinting of prospective employees of private special education schools; repealer

A6777 Nolan (MS) -- Relates to providing parents with the right and authority to exempt their children from taking standardized assessments

A7013 Nolan -- Relates to the takeover and restructuring of struggling and persistently struggling schools

A7303A Nolan -- Relates to performance reviews of classroom teachers and building principals and the comprehensive review of education standards administered by the state Department of Education

A7400 Kolb (MS) -- Relates to requiring a service center for independent living to be located in the county of Ontario

A7402 Nolan -- Provides that teachers, principals, and superintendents are no longer required to sign confidentiality agreements

A7508 Nolan (MS) -- Relates to extending the provisions relating to the reorganization of the NYC school construction authority, board of education and community boards

A7622B Woerner -- Authorizes the Ballston Spa Central School District to establish a semiconductor manufacturing tax stabilization reserve fund

A7623 Barrett -- Authorizes BOCES to provide instruction

to students at a certain property

A7677 Ryan (MS) -- Extends the implementation of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004

A7750 Lupardo (MS) -- Provides that the provision of school age child care in school buildings shall primarily be subject to the regulations of the Commissioner of Education

A7832A Lavine -- Legalizes, validates, ratifies and confirms a transportation contract of the Plainview-Old Bethpage Central School District

A8019 O'Donnell -- Relates to contracts for the transportation of school children

A8092 Nolan (MS) -- Relates to agreements for the administration, management or operation of charter schools

A8173 Mayer -- Relates to the applicable school years for designation of persistently failing schools

A8221 Duprey -- Relates to state aid to the Saranac Central School District

A8237 Lifton -- Extends the regional transportation systems pilot program

Regents Elections

In March, the legislature nominated and elected four new members of the State Board of Regents. Heeding the calls of parents across the state, I and my colleagues in the Assembly were careful to select candidates with extensive expertise and knowledge of primary education. We nominated four outstanding women: Judith Johnson, former Westchester Superintendent and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Education and Acting Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education and former superintendent of both the Peekskill and Mt. Vernon; Dr. Catherine Collins, an associate professor at SUNY Empire State College and a former instructor and administrator SUNY Buffalo; Regent Beverly Ouder Kirk, a former kindergarten teacher, principal, deputy superintendent, superintendent and BOCES District Superintendent at Genesee Valley

in Western New York; and Judith Chin, a Queens native and New York City public school teacher who has served the students of New York City for over 35 years, as a teacher, principal, Executive Director of Instruction and Professional Development, a Regional Superintendent, Chief Education Officer and a Supervising Superintendent.



As an elected representative of Queens and Chair of the Education Committee, I am particularly pleased with Regent Chin's

appointment as the first Regent of Asian American descent. Regent Chin's knowledge of our schools and her dedication to our children make her a fantastic candidate to represent Queens on the Board, and I am proud to have played a role in nominating and electing her. She is already doing a wonderful job.



Struggling Schools

This past year the state budget included language on state takeover of schools deemed to be "priority schools" through a receivership model. While the Assembly was opposed to this initiative, we were able to win important concessions through negotiation, including an extended time frame for these schools to show improvement before state takeover is considered, language that would require community input and engagement, and an additional \$75 million in funding for these schools to help them improve their performance and implement a Community School model.



Our new Queens Regent Judith Chin accompanied me to P.S. 111, a school in my district that is a priority school, where we toured the school and heard firsthand from Principal Dionne Jaggon some of the changes the school has already made with the support it gets through New York City's school renewal program. I later testified at the

school's receivership hearing in support of the school and to offer suggestions on what else can be done to support P.S. 111.

Of course, this is an issue that affects the entire state, not just my district. For this reason, the committee held a hearing on October 14th to seek information about the struggling schools initiative. Commissioner Elia testified on behalf of the New York State Department of Education, describing the program's implementation so far and expectations going forward. Many districts, including the New York City Department of Education, also testified as to what they were doing in their districts to address this issue and to describe their successes. Principals, teachers, parents and community groups also testified, expressing concerns about the resources and timeline of the program. Their testimony was extremely helpful in highlighting what issues the legislature will need to address going forward.



It was a great honor to be asked by Regent Lester Young to be a member of the New York State Board of Regents Workgroup to Improve Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color's Blue Ribbon Committee. At a workshop for the Committee, I was able to listen to many presentations on this important topic and have discussions with a wide variety of stakeholders, including CSA President Ernest Logan, State Education Commissioner Mary Elen Elia and new Buffalo Schools Superintendent Kriner Cash.

I joined Assemblyman Edward Ra for a roundtable in his district with parents, teachers and administrators to discuss the challenges they are facing in special education. We were also joined by Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer, Chair of our Subcommittee on Students with Special Needs, and Laura Palm Ferone, a former constituent of mine and current constituent of Assemblyman Ra.

Assemblywoman Mayer and I also hosted an Assembly Roundtable on 4201 schools, which included a tour of the New York School for the Deaf. I am grateful to Speaker Heastie for joining us on the tour of the school.



Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan with Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee and Michael Rebell.

Assemblymember Kenneth Zebrowski stopped by my office with several superintendents from his district in Westchester county to discuss a wide range of educational issues.



New York City Schools Chancellor Farina visited our committee to discuss issues important to New York City schools.



I attended an event with NYSUT President Karen Magee this summer focused on strengthening connections between women leaders.

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan, Chairwoman

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