



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

Senator Flanagan's Education Reform Package Approved By Senate Education Committee

JOHN J. FLANAGAN January 14, 2014

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Education reform legislation sponsored by Senator John Flanagan (2nd Senate District), Chairman of the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Education, has been reported out of committee. The bills were drafted after giving careful consideration to the concerns that were raised during the Education Committee's recent series of statewide public hearings entitled [The Regents Reform Agenda: "Assessing" Our Progress](#).

The four pieces of legislation that were reported out of committee, which will now be sent to the full Senate for further consideration and discussion, include the following:

- ["P-2" Bill](#) – which would ban standardized testing on students in Pre-K through 2nd grade;
- ["Unnecessary Testing" Bill](#) – which would require the Commissioner of Education to conduct an expedited review of a school district's APPR plan when it is resubmitted solely to eliminate unnecessary student assessments;
- [Privacy Bill](#) – which would strengthen protections of personal information stored on the state-wide data portal, establish significant civil and criminal penalties for unauthorized disclosure of personal information and create independent oversight within SED on matters related to privacy; and

- **“Truth-In-Testing” Bill** – would require the Commissioner of Education to report on the effectiveness of common core tests and require an independent audit to review and evaluate the common core testing program.

Common Core Learning Standards were adopted in New York by the Board of Regents in 2010. In the 2012-13 academic year, the State Education Department began aligning curriculum and assessments to the new learning standards in all grades, Pre-K through 12. The implementation has been admittedly flawed and a significant subject of controversy and criticism for parents, teachers and administrators.

The Senate Education Committee was the first official body to hold public hearings to allow education stakeholders to express their concerns and offer recommendations for making improvements. The five hearings produced over thirty hours of testimony, 115 witnesses and close to 1000 pages of written testimony which were all included as part of the official record.

At the hearings, which were held in Long Island, Syracuse, Buffalo, New York City and Albany, the Education Committee gathered extensive testimony from a broad cross-section of interested parties around the State on concerns related to the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) by the State Education Department (SED). The Committee heard heartfelt testimony from parents about their children’s frustrations in trying to understand the new curriculum while also trying to learn in a whole new way. Teachers expressed exasperation over the lack of time and resources given to professional development training in order to adequately prepare lesson plans before teaching and testing their students.

Those testifying also expressed a variety of concerns that included the over-testing of students, inadequate professional development funding for teacher training, incomplete and missing modules (i.e., curriculum), the use of test questions that were neither age-level nor developmentally appropriate, and the security of student, teacher and principal data that

will be stored on the statewide Education Data Portal (EDP).

In addition, privacy experts and school administrators raised serious concerns about the ability of unauthorized third-parties to access personally identifiable information (PII) of students, teachers and principals that will be collected on the state-wide EDP.

“Our state’s most basic obligation is to provide every student with the resources they deserve to achieve academic success and the Committee’s passage of this legislation is an important step in addressing the serious concerns raised at the hearings. Just as the hearings provided a robust and thoughtful dialogue regarding the issues related to the implementation of the State’s new learning standards, it is time for a similarly constructive discussion in the Legislature to make the changes our students, parents and teachers need,” stated Senator Flanagan. "At the end of the day, every parent wants the same thing for their children - a quality education - and it should always be the State's number one priority to provide the necessary support for achieving that goal."

Assemblymember Catherine Nolan (37th Assembly District) Chairwoman of the Assembly Education Committee, has agreed to be the Assembly sponsor of all four pieces of Senator Flanagan's legislative package.