



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanaugh

## Governor Hochul Signs Legislation to Declare Lunar New Year a School Holiday

BRIAN KAVANAGH September 11, 2023

| ISSUE: **ASIAN LUNAR NEW YEAR**



Governor Hochul Signs Bill Declaring Asian Lunar New Year a School Holiday

### Legislation (A.7768/S.7573) Requires All Public Schools Close for Asian Lunar New Year

Governor Kathy Hochul today signed legislation to declare Asian Lunar New Year a public school holiday across New York State. Legislation (A.7768/S.7573) would ensure schools are not in session on Lunar New Year, underscoring Governor Hochul's commitment to supporting and protecting New York's AAPI community.

“By designating Lunar New Year as an official school holiday, we are taking an important step in recognizing the importance of New York’s AAPI community and the rich diversity that makes New York so great,” **Governor Hochul said.** “It is not just a day off from school – it is an opportunity for our children to learn about and celebrate their own or different cultures and traditions.”

**Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie said,** “Making Lunar New Year a holiday for New York's public schools is a direct result of the hard work of the Assembly Majority and the dedicated members of our Asian Pacific Task Force. New York State is beautifully diverse, with people from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds living, working and raising families together. The Lunar New Year holiday will give thousands of Asian students in our state the ability to gather together and celebrate with family and friends without having to sacrificing their education. I hope this will also shine a light on the culture and traditions of our Asian friends and neighbors, and in a time where we have seen hate and violence against Asian communities, this will open people’s eyes, encouraging tolerance and acceptance. I thank Governor Hochul for her leadership and signing this important legislation.”

Legislation (A.7768/S.7573) amends the education law to declare Asian Lunar New Year a public school holiday statewide. The legislation requires that all public schools close for the Lunar New Year holiday.

**State Senator Brian Kavanagh said,** “New York’s story could not have been written without the many and varied contributions of Asian New Yorkers. Yet in many schools throughout the state, Asian families and students have to choose between attending school and celebrating their community’s most significant holiday. And many other New Yorkers are denied the opportunity to celebrate the diverse heritage of our state. So I am very proud that as of today we officially recognize Lunar New Year as a school holiday. I thank the the many Asian individuals, families, and organizations who advocated for this bill, the growing and

powerful delegation of Asian colleagues in the State legislature for their leadership, guidance, and support — especially Assemblymember Grace Lee and Senators John Liu and Iwen Chu — Assembly bill sponsor, Bill Colton, for his great work passing the bill in the Assembly, and Governor Kathy Hochul for signing it into law today.”

**Representative Grace Meng said,** “It was an honor to join Governor Hochul as she signed this historic bill and I applaud her for making it the law of the land in our state. When I was in the State Assembly in 2009, I led the bill to establish a New York City school holiday for Lunar New Year, and I remember how people laughed at it. There were so many naysayers who told me that it would never happen. Now, look at how far we have come. I am proud of the work I have done to help get us to this point and I thank all who played a role as well. And in Congress, I am continuing the fight by pushing legislation I authored that would make Lunar New Year a federal holiday.”

**Assemblymember William Colton said,** “Asian Americans have played a vital role in shaping our state and nation while continuously struggling to overcome many obstacles of discrimination and hardship. Making Asian Lunar New Year a state school holiday will benefit not only Asian Americans but will promote a strong message of hope in obtaining the American Dream for all groups. This historic legislation could not be possible without the leadership of the Governor, the Legislative Leadership and the support of Assembly Member Grace Lee, the bill’s prime co-sponsor and so many of my colleagues.”

**Assemblymember Grace Lee, Co-Chair of the Assembly’s Asian Pacific American (APA) Task Force said,** “It is an honor to have led this historic effort to recognize Lunar New Year as a statewide holiday in New York. As Asian Americans, we have gone unseen and unheard in New York for too long, and this bill is recognition for our contributions to New York history, and validation that our voices and our stories matter. Now, I will be able to join thousands of families across the state in celebrating Lunar New Year at home with my kids. This law will

expose new generations to Asian culture, and it will promote diversity and inclusion at a time when Asian New Yorkers are suffering from anti-Asian hate. By making New York the first state in the country to mandate statewide school closures in observance of Lunar New Year, we are setting a valuable example for other states to follow. I thank Governor Kathy Hochul, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and all my colleagues who supported this effort to secure this historic achievement for New York's AAPI community."

Governor Hochul has remained committed to supporting, protecting, and celebrating New York's AAPI community. In the FY 2024 Budget, Governor Hochul allocated \$30 million in awards for community organizations through Asian American Federation and the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families – the largest investment ever to support AAPI communities in the entire state. This funding goes towards an ever more diverse pool of community-based organizations providing culturally responsive and linguistically competent services, as well as addressing systemic violence, racism, and discrimination faced by the AAPI community.

**State Senator John Liu said,** "The Lunar New Year is the most significant time of the year for Asian Americans, and as the fastest growing community in the country, we need to make sure our heritage, culture and traditions are treated with the same respect and reverence as any other American holiday. Declaring Lunar New Year a State holiday is an important step in the recognition and validation of Asian Americans not just here in New York State, but throughout the country. Many thanks to Governor Hochul for making the signing of this legislation a priority."

**State Senator Iwen Chu said,** "Today, New York State will make Lunar New Year a public school holiday, a long fought effort for inclusion for Asian New Yorkers. Now families don't have to choose between their education and celebrating their cultural heritage. This act

recognizes the contributions of the AAPI community in the diverse tapestry of our great state and brings greater awareness, combatting the hate that AAPI New Yorkers face. I'm proud to have given this legislation my strong support and I thank Governor Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie for making this a priority in this legislative session."

**Assemblymember Edward Braunstein said,** "Establishing Lunar New Year as a statewide public-school holiday in New York is a landmark achievement, and I was proud to support this effort in the Assembly. A statewide school holiday will allow those who observe the holiday to celebrate with their families, as well as give all New Yorkers the opportunity to learn about the cultural and historical significance of Lunar New Year. I celebrate this historic moment and thank Governor Hochul for signing this bill into law."

**Assemblymember Ron Kim said,** "It took multiple generations of lawmakers to finally make Lunar New Year a recognized statewide holiday and I want to thank Governor Hochul for recognizing Asian Americans in a meaningful way. From former members Jimmy Meng, Ellen Young, and Grace Meng to new members like APA Task Force co-chair Grace Lee making this legislation a top priority, I'm grateful for all their contributions. Lastly, I want to thank Speaker Carl Heastie for his leadership and guidance in celebrating Asian Americans in New York State."

**Assemblymember Jenifer Rajkumar said,** "As the first South Asian woman ever elected to New York State Office, I thank Governor Kathy Hochul for signing this historic bill recognizing the rich diversity of our State and its AAPI community. Over 1 million New Yorkers across the State celebrate Lunar New Year, and today we say to all of them that we see you and we recognize you. I was proud to help drive this historic bill to passage. Today, we are making our education system work for all the diverse communities in our State. In an era of rising hate against the AAPI community nationwide, New York is a beacon of respect, tolerance,

and love for people of every faith and background.”

**Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas said,** “Lunar New Year is an important holiday for many cultures practiced and represented by our neighbors across New York City and State. With the signing of this bill into law we can continue to validate that all cultures should be celebrated by New Yorkers including our school children. Thank you to the prime sponsors and advocates for getting this done.”

**Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes said,** “Vibrant cultural roots are what make Brooklyn the home for so many communities. If we choose not to honor those cultures through our state government, we run the risk of losing that valued vibrancy. My home in Sunset Park is made by immigrant families who have fought for a better future, such as my own family and many who live and work in Chinatown. It is an honor to provide support for those students who celebrate Lunar New Year and to show how much we value this holiday. Students should never have to choose between their culture or their education, because learning about culture provides some of the best education there is. I'm glad to see Lunar New Year become a school holiday and know that many families in my district will celebrate this change.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2023-S7573**

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- Introduced
  - ◦ In Committee Assembly

- In Committee Senate
  
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- ◦ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
  
- Delivered to Governor
  
- Signed By Governor
  
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Declares Asian Lunar New Year a school holiday

June 08, 2023

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by [Brian Kavanagh](#)

Do you support this bill?