



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

## LOHUD: Perfect for your college app: NY school boards must soon add non-voting student member

GARY STERN September 6, 2024

Do school boards need a student voice?

They're going to have one in New York, as Gov. Kathy Hochul has signed a bill requiring all school boards to appoint at least one student member who will attend public meetings. Student members won't be allowed to vote or participate in executive sessions or other non-public meetings but will have a great addition to their college applications.

The law goes into effect July 1, 2025, meaning that student members should be in place for the next school year.

"What an education in democracy that'll be for them, hopefully inspiring them to know that each of us have a right of citizenship to participate," Hochul said. "Whether it's school boards, town boards, higher office, everyone has a responsibility, and at minimum responsibility to vote."

Student board members will be "ex-officio," meaning they will act in an advisory role.

It will be up to local districts and BOCES to decide how their student board members will be selected.

Student board members must be high school students who have been enrolled for at least one year.



Growing numbers of school boards across New York already have student members, but voters in each district have needed to approve the student positions. The new law removes that requirement.

The New York State School Boards Association estimates that about a third of New York's nearly 700 school boards and 37 BOCES boards now have non-voting student members.

State Sen. Shelley Mayer, D-Yonkers, chair of the Senate education committee, sponsored the legislation in the Senate.

"Today, students navigate a myriad of challenges in their lives at home and school," Mayer said. "Some of these challenges are familiar to those of us who were high school students decades ago. Others may not be — the impact of social media, experience of social isolation since the pandemic, or fear and anxiety about the climate crisis.



"This legislation will ensure that students have a seat at the table where decisions that shape their educational opportunities and experience are made and that members of the Board hear and benefit from their insights as students."

School board meetings have becoming increasingly combative in many districts across New York and the nation. It remains to be seen whether having a teenager on every school board

will lead to a toning down of public comments.

The NYS School Boards Association did not take a position on the legislation. Its president, Sandy Ruffo, said the organization supports the promotion of civic engagement, but holds that individual districts should decide "what methods work best."

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- - In Committee Assembly
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- - Passed Assembly
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- Delivered to Governor
  
- Signed By Governor

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Allows for the designation of students as ex officio members of school boards; repealer

April 10, 2024

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Shelley B. Mayer**

Do you support this bill?