



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Eric T. Schneiderman

Yoga Studios To Breathe Easier After State Regulators End Harassment

ERIC T. SCHNEIDERMAN August 31, 2009

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Sen. Schneiderman and Assm. Rosenthal Applaud Education Department's Reversal

NEW YORK – In response to the advocacy of Senator Eric T. Schneiderman and Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal on behalf of New York's yoga community, the State Education Department announced it will suspend burdensome licensing requirements for yoga instructors that carried penalties of \$50,000 for noncompliance. The reversal comes months after the Department accused yoga studios of violating the law by training new instructors without a license, despite the fact that such licenses have never been required before.

"The message from the community has been loud and clear: get your government hands off my yoga mat. Next time, the state will think twice before threatening a practice that brings so much tranquility to New Yorkers," said Sen. Schneiderman (D-Manhattan/Bronx). "The Education Department did the right thing by suspending these onerous, arbitrary regulations that threatened the livelihood of yoga studios throughout the state."

In May, the Department of Education sent letters ordering yoga centers that train

instructors to stop operating immediately and not reopen until the studios undergo a lengthy, state-run curriculum approval process. In response, Sen. Schneiderman introduced a bill (S.5701) that amends section 5001 of the state education law to include licensing exemptions for the instruction of students who enroll in courses “for the purposes of leisure, hobby, or personal enrichment,” including yoga. Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF- Manhattan) is the bill’s lead sponsor in the Assembly.

After the bills were introduced, the Education Department backed down. S.5701 passed the Senate Higher Education Committee and is now awaiting a vote in the full Senate.

Citing its support for the Schneiderman/Rosenthal legislation, the Education Department wrote in its letter, “we are suspending any licensing requirements pending action by the New York State Legislature. At this time, we will not require licensure nor will we pursue any organization offering this training as an unlicensed school.”

“I am relieved that the State Education Department has agreed to abandon its stance demanding licensure of yoga instructors,” said Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal. “The prospect of the state shutting down yoga studios caused a lot of worry and anxiety; the resolution of this situation will allow all those involved with yoga to continue its healthful and stress-relieving practice, unfettered by government intervention.”

“I am proud to say that the State Education Department has achieved supreme awareness and enlightenment on this issue,” Schneiderman added.

The State Education Department’s letter to yoga studios is available at:

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/bpss/pdf/YogaInstructorTrainingPossibleExemptionUpdate.pdf>

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