



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

Senators Rivera & Espaillat Testified Before Department of Education Hearing on Proposed JFK High School Closing

GUSTAVO RIVERA February 3, 2011

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New York, NY (Jan. 28, 2011) – New York State Senators Adriano Espaillat (D – 31st District) and Gustavo Rivera (D – 33rd District) testified at a public hearing regarding the Department of Education’s proposal to close down John F. Kennedy High School in the Bronx. The joint public hearing was observed by the District 10 Community Education Council and the JFK School Leadership Team.

Both senators outlined their commitment to improving the educational opportunities available for local students. Sen. Espaillat and Sen. Rivera have expressed concerns about the Department of Education’s lack of communication with parents, particularly a lack of adequate notice about tonight’s hearing and other important developments. They called for a fair and transparent process that provides parents and community leaders with the opportunity to voice their opinions and inquiries, and that their input is then reflected in the Department’s plans moving forward.

“Parents shouldn’t be learning about their children’s school being closed through newspaper clippings or word of mouth,” said Sen. Gustavo Rivera. “Our constituents deserve a transparent process that provides them with the information they need and gives these parents a seat at the table when important determinations are being made. We can do better.”

“With nothing short of our children’s future riding on our schools, it is unacceptable to leave parents and community members in the dark and out of the decision making process,” said Sen. Adriano Espaillat.

Senators Rivera and Espaillat have laid out a set of principles they believe must be followed as the Department of Education proceeds with closings:

Ø JFK must only close if the alternative school(s) offer a quality of education that is truly excellent and significantly better than what is currently offered at JFK.

Ø The transition process must be smooth and carefully planned so as to limit disruptions for students.

Ø Parents and local community members must be given access to all information in a timely manner and allowed a voice in the decision making process.

Ø There must be viable placement options for the district’s “over the counter” admissions of special need students (English Language Learners/ELL, students with Individualized Education Plans/IEP, and Students with Interrupted Formal Education/SIFE) who otherwise would go to JFK.

“While reasonable people can disagree about the nuts and bolts of specific provisions in any transition that takes place, we have outlined principles that must be met in order for the Department of Education to uphold their commitment to providing our kids with a quality education,” said Sen. Rivera.