



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

Senator Oppenheimer Urges Colleagues to Keep Focus on Education

SUZI OPPENHEIMER April 8, 2011

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Partial Restoration of Education Aid Helpful, But Still Leaves Schools Districts in Precarious Position

Speaking on the Senate floor, Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) acknowledged that the recently enacted NYS FY 2011-12 budget was a difficult budget for difficult times. But she credited her colleagues in the Legislature and Governor Cuomo with restoring millions in state education aid. This will partially ease the burden on school districts already weathering serious economic challenges.

The enacted budget restores \$270 million of the \$1.5 billion in education cuts that had been proposed in the Governor's Executive budget. While the reductions to school districts in Westchester and throughout the state remain significant, the partial restoration will mean more state aid for Westchester school districts than would have been received in the Governor's initial proposal.

"I would have liked to have seen a larger restoration of education funds," said Senator Oppenheimer, commenting on the joint budget agreement between the Legislature and the Governor. "But with declining state revenues, this is a crisis year for New York State. I applaud Governor Cuomo for providing strong leadership to turn our state around." Going forward, the Senator impressed upon her colleagues the urgency of addressing "the critical challenges we continue to face in education throughout the state. We need to improve schools that are failing and preserve excellence where it exists, even as school districts cope with reduced revenues."

"The need to work together with the Governor has never been more critical," the Senator told her Legislative colleagues. "We must pay special attention to the delicate, precarious place we have put our school districts. Our schools need our immediate help to reduce their costs, provide mandate relief, improve teaching and protect a system that has already suffered incredible losses." Citing programs cuts in art, music, physical education, pre-k and full day kindergarten, Senator Oppenheimer noted that "we have a lot of work ahead of us."

"In every classroom, in every part of the state, there are children who are counting on us. One grade at a time, one year at a time, one childhood at a time, there are no do-overs for these kids. We must not fail them."