



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Letter to Archdiocese Re: Proposed Closure of St. Jerome School

JOSÉ M. SERRANO December 10, 2012

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION**

December 10, 2012

Dear Dr. McNiff,

I am writing to you as the State Senator of the 28th Senate District, representing the South and West Bronx, to express my serious concerns with your decision to proceed with the closure of St. Jerome School. In addition to my role as an elected official, I am a lifelong resident of the Bronx, and I know firsthand the important role that St. Jerome plays in this community and I urge you to reconsider.

On December 3rd, St. Jerome was informed that they would be forced to close at the end of the school year unless they developed an effective remedial plan by January 3rd. However, my understanding is that the remedial plan does not have anything to do with academics, but rather requires the school to generate over a million dollars in a short one month time frame. Such a request for a school in even the most affluent area would be extremely difficult, however it is an insurmountable task for a school located in such an economically depressed area.

The closing of St. Jerome would send a dishearteningly negative message to the residents of

the Bronx. St. Jerome maintains an iconic presence in the community, where they have provided services since the 1800s for what has traditionally been a low-income, immigrant community. In particular, St. Jerome has always provided a quality education for the youth of the community, many of whom are on scholarship to attend the school they otherwise could not afford. Many current students live in nearby housing projects and complexes and walk to school each and every day. The closing of St. Jerome will create an especially undue burden on those children who would be required to scramble to find a new school, that may not be within walking distance. In addition, numerous students at St. Jerome have already experienced previous school closings at nearby institutions before enrolling at St. Jerome. Having these students change schools for the second time is simply unfair.

I strongly urge you to stop the decisions on closures on January 3rd and provide schools with the resources to create plans and allow the administration and parish priests to assist parents; as well as allow parents the ability to reach out to their school alumni. And lastly and most importantly, provide parents with a deadline of the end of the school year to come up with a viable plan. Thank you very much for your consideration. If you would like to discuss this with me, please do not hesitate to contact me in my office at (212)828-5829.

Sincerely,

José M. Serrano