



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Commends Collective Efforts to Keep Pinnacle Students in their School

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY August 29, 2013

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*Students will return to their school this year after Buffalo Public Schools agree to accept proposal to annex Pinnacle to an existing school in district.*

*After hearing reports of closure, Senator Kennedy joined parents in urging NYSED to find ways to keep the school open.*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, is commending the collective efforts that ensured Pinnacle Charter School students are allowed to return to their school for the start of the academic year. NYSED had informed students' parents that they ordered the school to close Sunday, barely a week before the start of classes. Since then, parents and students have been fighting NYSED's decision and working to keep the school open.

Earlier this week, Senator Kennedy wrote to NYSED Commissioner John King and made it clear that the over 550 students at Pinnacle should not be left in academic limbo, but should have the opportunity to return to their school next week. Today, the Pinnacle Charter School board approved a proposal to request that Buffalo Public Schools make Pinnacle a part of their school system, and the Buffalo Board of Education voted to accept their proposal.

“Of Pinnacle’s 550 students, there are kindergartners who are preparing for their first day of school, first through eighth graders anxiously waiting to see their friends after a long summer and hundreds of students who may have been forced to start all over again at critical times in their development. Now that this closure crisis is behind us, these young students can now focus their full attention on achieving their highest academic potential,” said Senator Kennedy. “Buffalo families deserve consistency and quality in their children’s education. I was proud to join the students’ parents and amplify their call to keep Pinnacle open and allow their children to return to the school for the start of the academic year.

“It was unconscionable that the State Education Department would try to close this school with just a week’s notice, but the closure and the displacement of over 550 students were today averted. This agreement for Pinnacle was reached through the cooperation and collective efforts of all those who were willing to put Buffalo’s children first and above all else. Now it’s up to Buffalo Public Schools. They need to ensure Pinnacle’s students get the great education they need to set them forward on the path to college or careers.”

Closing the school would have displaced the students and left parents scrambling in search of other options. In his letter to NYSED, Kennedy urged them to develop solutions that would allow students to remain in their school for the coming academic year.

You can read the text of Senator Kennedy’s letter below. [Or view it by clicking this link.](#)

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and most of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at [kennedy.nysenate.gov](http://kennedy.nysenate.gov).*

Senator Kennedy's letter to NYSED Commissioner King:

August 27, 2013

Dear Commissioner King:

I write on behalf of 550 students, hundreds of parents and the dozens of teachers and administrators who call Pinnacle Charter School home. I am disappointed that a school with high enrollment, showing a clear pattern of improvement in test scores, would be closed a week before the start of the school year. This decision will negatively impact stakeholders in the Buffalo community. I urge you to keep the school open and let the students return to their school next week.

Pinnacle Charter School is a school on the rise serving Buffalo's economically disadvantaged youth. Buffalo needs schools like Pinnacle that are willing to take on challenging situations and work through them for the betterment of their students. Simply transferring Pinnacle Charter School's students to various Buffalo Public Schools will further complicate the situation for BPS, which is working to overcome their own challenges.

There are solutions to the problems Pinnacle has faced over the past few years. One of these solutions is to allow Pinnacle Charter due time with regards to their turnaround plan. Their test scores continue to show improvement due to an aggressive approach by the Pinnacle's teachers and administration. I implore the Education Department to work with the administrators of Pinnacle Charter School to find sensible solutions for the students, parents and teachers.

Pinnacle's administration has shown a willingness to work with the state to find optimal solutions for their students. I believe the best solution includes allowing Pinnacle to again open its doors on September 4<sup>th</sup> to welcome the 550 students who attend Pinnacle Charter School and continue to show improvement.

Of these 550 students, there are kindergartners who are preparing for their first day of school, first through eighth graders anxiously waiting to see their friends after a long summer and hundreds of students who now must start all over again at critical times in their development. This last-minute decision to close Pinnacle just a week before classes start will prove to be a detriment to the children and families who deserve consistency and quality in their education.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this request. For further reference, please do not hesitate to contact me at (716)-826-2683.

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Kennedy

New York State Senator, 63<sup>rd</sup> District