



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Hugh T. Farley

Farley, Fahy Introduce Legislation That Allows for Community Service in Place of Suspension in Schools

HUGH T. FARLEY January 30, 2014

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State Senator Hugh T. Farley (R, C, I – Schenectady) joins Assemblymember Patricia A. Fahy (D-Albany) in introducing legislation that will allow for community service to be made an option to be in place of or in conjunction with suspension of students in public schools.

“I am pleased to join with Assemblywoman Fahy in sponsoring this legislation,” said Senator Farley. “Our bill would provide schools with greater flexibility in disciplining students. While suspension may be appropriate in many cases, there are other situations where an alternate

approach may be more effective and more beneficial to both the student and the affected community.”

The bill (A.8509/S.6282) would amend the state’s education law to include a provision that allows for flexibility for school administrators to provide the option of community service to students who violate the district’s code of conduct. The change in the law allows for superintendents to have additional options to reprimand students.

“Giving districts and school officials additional options to remedy violations that take place within schools is critical in providing students an alternate path in becoming contributing members of society. Community service, when used appropriately, can be a more constructive option than suspension. It would allow the student to give back to the community and hopefully learn something in the process,” said Assemblymember Fahy.

“In some cases, it simply makes sense for superintendents to have the option to compel students to complete community service as a consequence of their actions. This option means that students will not fall behind in their studies, and they might also learn a powerful lesson about making a positive difference in the lives of others. It makes it possible to turn a negative set of circumstances into something good,” said Guilderland School District Superintendent Marie Wiles, Ph.D.

“This legislation would provide superintendents with additional flexibility that would greatly assist in our efforts to help students through discipline and behavioral issues,” said City School District of Albany Superintendent Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard, Ph.D. “It would be a valuable tool for us as we consider the appropriate response to issues that are manifested in behaviors that interrupt learning.”

Currently, school administrators may impose a variety of penalties to students, including detention, in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspension for up to five days. Should a significant violation in a district’s code of conduct take place, the violation is then referred to the district’s superintendent. The superintendent’s only course of action is to provide a

further suspension. In certain situations, removing students from the school may be required in order to protect and preserve the safety and continuity of the learning environment for other students. However, in many cases, a prolonged absence from school can be counterproductive to the goal of schools: to prepare students to be contributing members of communities.