



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

Serino Strikes a Balance on Education Reform

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SERINO STRIKES A BALANCE ON EDUCATION REFORM

Statement Regarding the Passage of the Education Reform Budget Bill

ALBANY, NY – Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) released the following statement regarding the passage of the Education Reform Budget Bill:

“I ran for the State Senate because I wanted to see a change in the way government operates. I want to be a part of a government that listens, a government that understands and most importantly, a government that puts people before politics. To do that on this issue, I have visited local schools and met with countless parents, teachers, administrators, board members and students to listen directly to their needs and priorities.

From those meetings, there were two messages that I heard loud and clear. First, everyone can agree that investing in the success of our students needs to be a top priority. Second, the future of our kids is just too important to let the Governor hold our educational system and our students hostage with the misguided education reform proposals recommended in his 2015-16 Executive Budget.

As a new Senator, I was told time and again that rejecting those proposals simply could not be done. However, residents of the 41st District should know that thanks to their dedicated efforts and the commitment of the Senate to aggressively push back against those proposals, we succeeded in delivering more aid to our schools and rejecting the Governor’s one-size fits all approach to evaluating teachers and our students.

With the words of educators, parents and students in mind, going into budget negotiations I had three primary objectives:

1.) The final budget needed to deliver for both students and taxpayers alike.

*To that end, the enacted budget will include an **increase of \$1.4 billion in State Education Aid**. Further, it will drastically **reduce the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA)**—a fiscally irresponsible measure that has cost local schools over \$160 million since 2010—by almost **sixty percent** and **promises to fully eliminate it next year**.*

This increase in funding represents a major win for our schools and our taxpayers as it gives our local schools the ability to deliver quality education without increasing the local tax levy above the tax cap.

2.) The final budget needed to reduce the emphasis of testing on both students and teachers and it especially needed to reduce the test time dedicated to Common Core aligned exams.

There is no such thing as a one-size fits all approach to education. I get it—Common Core and APPR are flawed. They absolutely do not accurately reflect the abilities of our teachers or our students. As a small business owner, I understand the need to evaluate our workforce if the goal is to make the system more effective and I certainly understand the value in higher standards. However, blaming teachers who have dedicated their lives to our kids is no way to improve our education system.

For these reasons, I am proud to have removed the Governor's onerous fifty percent benchmark for teacher evaluations from the final budget. The measures passed today genuinely intend to reduce the over-testing.

Further, it requires a new evaluation system to be put into place—after a public comment period—that will require districts to consider several measures beyond the tests including local input and outside observations.

3.) The issue of teacher tenure needs to be addressed in a way that strikes a balance between protecting the rights of teachers and the safety of students while preserving the quality of our schools.

Under no circumstances should a tenured teacher be stripped of their due process rights. However, we have an obligation to ensure that our students are receiving high quality education in safe and secure environments. The decision in the final budget to alter tenure requirements to provide for a four year probationary period represents a more reasonable response to the Governor's proposal that strikes that balance.

I fully acknowledge that there is still work to be done to improve the quality of education in New York. Undoing the damage done by initiatives like Common Core and APPR is no small task, but I want to assure you that I am working each and every day toward realistic, workable solutions.

It is a new year in Albany and there are a lot of new faces in both houses ready and willing to take on these challenges.

I am confident that we will find ways to continue to work together to come up with real solutions to make New York a better place for our educators to live and work and for our students to thrive.”

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