



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Senate Passes Major Education Reform Bill

JAMES L. SEWARD June 15, 2015

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ALBANY, 06/15/15 – State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I- Oneonta) today announced senate approval of the Kids First Agenda which includes key reforms to improve education in our schools.

“This year’s state budget included a record \$1.4 billion school aid increase, called for a reduction of standardized testing, and altered many of the governor’s overbearing teacher evaluation proposals. Still, I have been working for additional reforms to further improve our local schools and the senate has now approved legislation that will help accomplish that goal,” said Senator Seward. **“The Kids First Agenda incorporates many of the excellent ideas parents, teachers, and school**

administrators have offered since the budget was passed earlier this year.”

Key elements of [senate bill 5954](#) include:

- Empowering both parents and teachers by directing the state education department (SED) to release test questions and corresponding answers back to teachers by June 1st each year. This will not only ensure greater accountability and transparency in testing, but will also ensure that tests are used as true teaching tools rather than simply a data collection device;
- Protecting teachers by establishing in education law, a requirement that SED must consider specific characteristics (such as English language learners, students with disabilities, students in poverty, and a student’s prior academic history) as factors in the calculation of a teacher’s student growth score;
- Protecting teachers by ensuring that teachers are only compared with other teachers that have similar classrooms with similar student characteristics;
- Protecting teachers and students by establishing a content review committee – to be made up of teachers and educational experts – that will work to ensure that state exams in grades 3 through 8 are grade-appropriate, time-appropriate, and in-line with the standards;
- Empowering both parents and teachers by extending the time period for public comment on SED’s newly announced APPR standards and regulations. An additional 45 days will be provided to ensure additional time for public input;
- Helping school districts by extending – from November 15, 2015 to February 15, 2016 – the date by which school districts can submit their APPR plans to SED for approval;
- For school districts that have difficulty meeting this newly extended, the bill specifically directs SED to promulgate rules and regulations allowing for a hardship extension all the

way to September 2016; and

- Charting a course for even more sweeping reforms by requiring a comprehensive SED review – with education stakeholders – of the effectiveness and appropriateness of Common Core standards.

“Outstanding local schools are a source of pride in our communities. They are also the key to a bright future for our young people. I have consistently stood up for our students, parents, and teachers and the senate’s Kids First Agenda is another example of my commitment to make certain that our public schools are the very best,” Seward concluded.

The bill was sent to the assembly.