



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

Senate Passes Education Reform Legislation Empowering Students and Teachers

JOHN J. BONACIC June 16, 2015

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(Albany, NY)- Senator John J. Bonacic (R/C/I-Mt. Hope) is pleased to announce that legislation which he supported, making key education reforms aimed at empowering students and teachers in New York, has passed the Senate. As part of the FY 2015-2016 State Budget, education spending increased by more than 6%. Senate Republicans fought to further eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA), successfully reducing these devastating cuts by more than 85% overall. Senate Republicans also stood up to the Governor when he decided to include controversial education proposals in the Budget, and link the enactment of the controversial measures to the distribution of state school aid,

which caused great consternation on the part of school districts and parents.

The legislation passed yesterday by the Senate, S5954 would build upon the important education reforms achieved by Senate Republicans in the Budget by:

Directing the State Education Department (SED) to release test questions and the corresponding correct answers to teachers by June 1st of the same school year. Doing so will encourage greater transparency and accountability, and ensure that the standardized tests are a learning tool, not just a data collection device. The bill appropriates \$8.4 million to SED specifically for this purpose;

Helping students by enacting measures to ensure that state exams in grades 3-8 are grade-appropriate and time-appropriate;

Requiring an additional 45-day public comment period following the release of the new draft regulations now being put together by the State Education Department - - allowing students, teachers, parents, grandparents and others to make their voices heard on this important statewide education issue;

Helping schools by extending – from November 15, 2015 to February 15, 2016—the date by which school districts can submit plans to SED for approval;

Directing SED to implement rules and regulations allowing for hardship extension all the way to September of 2016 for districts that are having trouble meeting the Feb 15, 2016 deadline;

Requiring SED to consider student 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 scores, and;

Requiring a comprehensive SED review – with education stakeholders – of the effectiveness and appropriateness of Common Core standards.

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“My colleagues and I have listened and received the concerns of parents, students, teachers and administrators regarding this process and I believe this legislation makes positive reforms,” said Senator Bonacic. “This bill goes along way in allaying any fears that students and teachers may have had when Governor Cuomo unveiled his initial education proposals.

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