



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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The “Quality Child Care and Protection Act”

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Teachers, parents, administrators and students agree that classrooms should be safe havens, free of violence and fear. But far too often, they can resemble battlegrounds, where a small number of students seek to disrupt the learning environment with chaos and violence.

In the past decade, 14,000 school teachers and staff were victimized in New York classrooms, and thousands were so badly hurt that they were forced to miss work. In addition to preparing their lesson plans, grading papers and delivering lectures, teachers shouldn't have to worry about their own safety in the classroom.

Earlier this year, my colleagues and I in the Senate Majority announced a series of statewide public hearings to call attention to the growing problem of assaults on public school teachers. We also took steps to help restore order in the classroom by approving legislation that would make it a felony to attack a teacher or staff member on school grounds -- an initiative which had the support of major teachers' unions throughout the state.

That is why I am pleased to announce that New York State will enact a comprehensive plan to promote a safer and more effective learning environment within New York's schools. The legislative package reflected in the school violence prevention bill and additional

legislation requiring fingerprints and background checks for prospective school employees, includes the following initiatives:

- Clarifies teachers' authority to remove disruptive students from the classroom;
- Makes assaults on teachers or teachers' assaults on students a felony;
- Incorporates civility, citizenship and character education throughout the K-12 curriculum;
- Requires all school districts to create a comprehensive school safety plan;
- Establishes new violence prevention programs, defines child abuse in an educational setting;
- Ends the practice of silent resignations;
- Requires court notification of student adjudications and convictions; and
- Establishes whistle-blower protection for school employees who report acts of violence.

Children can only learn in an environment free from fear -- and teachers deserve to have peace of mind while in their classrooms and have the authority to remove disruptive students. This is a common sense approach to ensuring that unruly students are dealt with directly before violence occurs and gives teachers an added sense of confidence in their own safety and their ability to control classroom order.

Parents deserve greater assurance from the State that a licensed or registered child care provider does not have a previous criminal record. It is inexcusable that families who have to rely on outside child care, need to fear for their children's safety. We must ensure that parents in New York feel confident that the day care providers to whom they entrust their children are well trained and have passed a criminal history screening.

That is why I am pleased to announce a new measure that would provide for criminal background checks for all day care workers and institute a critical retention and incentive program to encourage New Yorkers to enter the child care field.

The "Quality Child Care and Protection Act" will allow the State to more closely monitor day care providers and impose tough penalties on providers who fail to adequately care for our children.

Provisions of the Quality Child Care and Protection Act include:

- State funded fingerprinting of all child care providers and individuals over 18 who reside in a home-based day care program;
- Increased inspection of day care providers, and child care programs;
- Increased training for child care givers;
- Creation of a Child Care Recruitment and Retention Program; and
- Doubles fines for providers who violate state regulations.

No child should ever be associated with some of the shocking reports concerning care givers who have violated their trust. We have to make sure that our child care providers have no previous criminal record to ensure the safety of our children.

This legislation is an investment in our children. Not only does the measure protect our youth from those who might prey on them, it also provides for incentives for individuals to enter the child care field.