



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Statement by Senator Griffo on SUNY's decision to eliminate disclosure of criminal history on college applications

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO September 20, 2016

| ISSUE: **SUNY, COLLEGE, PUBLIC SAFETY**

State Senator Joseph Griffo, R-Rome, released the following statement today in response to SUNY's recent decision to no longer require prospective students to disclose felony criminal history:

I am deeply concerned about the recent decision by the State University of New York Board of Trustees to eliminate the requirement for prospective students to disclose any prior felony convictions on their college applications.

When parents send their children off to college, they should be comforted in the assurance that the college is doing everything they can to keep the campus safe. By not requiring all potential students to disclose their felony criminal history, I believe our public colleges may expose their campuses to dangerous situations. In this modern era when we have seen random acts of violence and atrocity on our college campuses, I believe our public colleges have an obligation to know the background of every student they consider enrolling.

I understand that many of us make regrettable mistakes at a young age, and that past should not necessarily condemn a person for the rest of their life from gaining a fruitful education and living a fulfilling life. But when we're talking about protecting all of the students, staff and visitors at a college, I do not believe keeping important facts secret about

a student's background is in the best interest of campus safety. It's one thing to hold someone's criminal record against them; it's another thing to turn a blind eye. We've already taken steps in Albany to protect our college students from sexual assaults on campus by passing the "Enough is Enough" legislation, and so eliminating the requirement to disclose felony convictions would not be consistent with continuing this growing focus on campus safety.

One of my primary concerns is what safeguards SUNY will plan on implementing to assure the safety of other students and staff once any students with prior felony convictions are admitted to the college. According to SUNY's decision, students who already have been admitted will only be asked about felony convictions if they are seeking to live on campus or participate in certain internships, clinical, or study abroad programs. But, if the student commutes to campus and does not reside there, or if the student does not try to enroll in an internship through the college, then how will the college ever know if a student's criminal past may pose a potential safety risk? These are important questions that must be thoroughly answered.

Unless the SUNY Board of Trustees reverses its decision and reinstates the requirement for prospective students to disclose their past felony convictions, I am willing to consider legislation sponsored in the Senate ([S8192](#)) that will once again require colleges to take seriously this vital screening process.

###

RELATED LEGISLATION

2015-S8192

- Introduced
- ◦ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- ◦ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Directs the board of trustees of the state university to require applicants to state-operated institutions to state whether they have been convicted of a violent felony offense

September 16, 2016

In Senate Committee [Rules](#)

Sponsored by [Catharine Young](#)

Do you support this bill?
