



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Senators Stewart-Cousins and Latimer and Assemblymembers Mayer and Pretlow Announce Governor Cuomo Has Signed Yonkers City School District Reconstruction Bill Into Law

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS September 30, 2016

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION**

Yonkers, NY – Today, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the Yonkers City School District Joint Schools and Modernization Act (A9932-A/S7459-A) sponsored by Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer (D – 90th District) and Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D/I/WFP – 35th District).

The new law, entitled the Yonkers City School District Joint Schools Construction and Modernization Act, establishes the first phase of a multi-phase project to construct and renovate Yonkers Public Schools. The legislation creates a nine member Joint Schools Construction Board (JSCB), which has the authority to finance up to \$523 million dollars for the first phase of the Rebuild Yonkers Schools project. Phase 1 provides for the construction of up to three new buildings and critical infrastructure system replacements for up to 39 of the existing schools to ensure the schools are maintained and operated in a safe manner.

The JSCB will develop a comprehensive plan outlining the projects in consultation with the New York State Comptroller, the State Education Department, the Yonkers Board of Education and community members. The plan must include cost estimates for each project, a minimum of one hearing in each of the neighborhoods impacted and checkpoints to ensure the project does not exceed anticipated costs. The bill is patterned after the

mechanism utilized by the Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse school districts.

The legislation provides a framework by which the fiscally dependent school district can address some of the structural problems that plague the Yonkers Public School District, especially deteriorating school buildings and a seat deficit of over 4,000 seats.

The average age of a school building in Yonkers is 75 years – ten years older than the average age of school buildings in the rest of New York State. The buildings have deteriorated at a rate that has outpaced the district's ability to repair them, and the many buildings now represent serious impediments to learning and teaching. This bill empowers the city to fund new construction and renovations with an alternative system similar to ones employed in Rochester, Buffalo and Syracuse.

"Now that the Governor has signed this bill into law, we have a strong foundation from which we can address the rebuilding of Yonkers schools," said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. "This is the onset of a long journey, but now that a functional framework is in place, we can all come together--our partners in government and stakeholders--to commence the process of restoring these schools for the sake of our children."

"The students of Yonkers deserve adequate space and up-to-date facilities to learn and develop to their fullest potential. I am proud to have sponsored and fought so hard for this legislation," said Assemblymember Mayer. "I applaud Governor Andrew Cuomo for signing this important bill, and thank Mayor Mike Spano, the leadership and Board of the Yonkers Public Schools, the YCPTAs, the Yonkers Federation of Teachers and all of the other stakeholders who supported this collective effort. With the signing of this bill, we will now be able to move ahead with a real plan to improve our school infrastructure to meet the needs of our students and families."

Assemblyman Pretlow said, “Thank you to Governor Andrew Cuomo, my colleagues, and all the advocates who helped push this legislation to passage and signing. We are on our way to providing the students in the Yonkers Public Schools the space and building conditions they deserve. This has been a long time in coming, and I will continue my efforts on behalf of the children of Yonkers.”

"This is a great moment for the students and families of Yonkers, but it is only the beginning. I am chomping at the bit to get back up to Albany and fight alongside the Yonkers delegation and Mayor Spano to provide these students with the facilities they need by getting the school system the money that is needed to make it happen," said Senator George Latimer, ranking member of the Senate Education Committee.

“The Governor’s signing of this act signifies our State and City’s commitment to our schools and to the thousands of students in the Yonkers Public Schools whose education will benefit from modern, healthy learning environments,” said Mayor Spano. “Thank you to our New York State delegation, our Yonkers Board of Education and all our local advocates for lending their voices in making this first step possible. Now we have a strong foundation to start the next phase of the process, which should include state reimbursements to fund the project.”

RELATED LEGISLATION

2015-S7459A

-
- 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
-

Establishes the Yonkers city school district joint schools construction and modernization act

May 03, 2016

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by **Andrea Stewart-Cousins**

Do you support this bill?