



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Todd Kaminsky

Senator Kaminsky Hosts Diploma Options Forum

SENATOR TODD KAMINSKY February 7, 2017

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Tonight, Senator Todd Kaminsky brought together some of the state's top education officials and a bipartisan coalition of local lawmakers, including NYS Board of Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa, to advance his plan to improve diploma options for students. Students, parents, teachers and school administrators came together to address the problem of the lack of diploma options that was created when New York State abolished the local diploma several years ago.

Panelists Included: Senator Todd Kaminsky; NYS Board of Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa; Long Island Regent Roger Tilles; Christopher Suriano, Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Special Education, New York State Education Department; Senator John Brooks; Assemblyman Brian Curran; Assemblyman David McDonough; and Assemblywoman Melissa "Missy" Miller.

“Tonight, our top education officials heard from anguished parents, students and educators who are fed up with the system that leaves too many behind. It is our duty to ensure that students are able to fulfill their potential, and right now our state needs to do much more to ensure that becomes a reality. I look forward to working with other elected officials as well as the Board of Regents and the State Education Department to come up with creative solutions to find an alternative pathway to achieving a diploma,” said Senator Todd Kaminsky after the forum.

The forum was held in the South Side High School Auditorium. Assistant Commissioner Suriano gave a short presentation on diploma options, after which members of the public were invited to make their voices heard by providing comments or asking the panel questions. At the conclusion of the forum, Senator Kaminsky called on his fellow legislators and NYS officials to take action to expand diploma options available for students.

Additionally, the following statements were issued:

Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, "Every New York student deserves an equal opportunity to achieve their dreams and have their hard work recognized by our school system. I applaud Senator Todd Kaminsky for his leadership on this issue and for his dedication to empower New York families and students."

Senator John E. Brooks said, "As someone who struggled throughout high school due to an undiagnosed learning disorder, and as a former School Board President, I know firsthand that no student is alike and every student learns differently. We must do more to expand diploma options for all students because the ability to pass a Regents exam should not dictate or limit a student's potential to succeed after school. I applaud Senator Kaminsky and Chancellor Rosa for tackling this injustice head on and including Long Island parents and students in the discussion -- it is the first step to rectifying the problem and honoring the talent and contributions of all students."

"It's important that we fight to give every child a chance to learn and be recognized for their growth and accomplishments in school. I appreciate that the State Education Department is working to make this certificate inclusive; however these students deserve to be recognized with a diploma. My son is a student in a life skills program. I know how important this is to these kids and their families. I'll work hard to make sure that happens," said Assemblywoman Missy Miller.

"New York State's education policies should move away from a 'one size fits all' approach," stated Assemblywoman Michaelle C. Solages. "By offering multiple pathways to a diploma, we can inspire a love of learning as well as prepare students for a future beyond the classroom."