



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie: Senate Approves Measures to Improve School Safety, Enhance Mental Health Services

BRIAN DWYER March 5, 2018

| ISSUE: **SCHOOL SAFETY**



State Senator Patty Ritchie Monday is announcing Senate passage of a series of bills aimed at improving school safety through security advancements for students, while also providing the funding for every school in the state to hire a qualified School Resource Officer.

Included in the package of legislation approved Monday was a bill sponsored by Senator Ritchie that would enhance and improve in-school mental health counseling for students.

The measure, (S.7838), calls for a statewide review of school counselors, school social workers and school psychologists who serve students. It also directs the state Education Commissioner to develop a plan to achieve nationally accepted professional-to-student ratios in every district and region.

Currently, one in five children will face a mental health issue at one point during their academic career whether it be from bullying, family issues, anxiety, drugs, alcohol or mental illness. Having a sufficient number of mental health professionals on hand, to interact, spot problems early and work with students can be a critical part of their success.

“When children leave for school in the morning, no parent should have to worry about whether their child is safe,” said Senator Ritchie.

“However, in today’s world nearly every parent does. The safety of our children—especially in a place like a school—has to be among our top priorities. It is for me, and I know that by taking steps, such as improving mental health services for students, increasing the availability of School Resource Officers and making investments in improved security, we can ensure that our children and those who work so hard to help them achieve brighter futures are safe.”

Other measures cosponsored by Senator Ritchie and approved by the Senate Monday include:

- Measures that would create a School Resource Officers Education Aid Program and authorize districts to receive state funding to hire a School Resource Officer or contract with the state, a county, city, town, or village for their services (S.7811A and S.7810A);

- A bill that would increase the earnings limitations for retired police officers while employed by the schools. Earnings would be increased from the current \$30,000 per year limit to \$50,000 per year (S.7791);
- Legislation (S.7846) that would improve the Smart School Bond Act Allocation process by requiring the Smart Schools Review Board to meet monthly and approve plans submitted by schools, provide updates on pending applications, and notify schools within seven days of a plan being rejected or modifications being sought;
- A bill to create the “Mental Health Services Program Coordinator Education Aid Program,” which would make schools eligible for \$50,000 in state funding for the hiring of a mental health services coordinator (S.7805);
- A measure that would define school shootings as terrorism and improve intelligence to prevent attacks (S.7813-A);
- Legislation to increase “active shooter drills” and allow districts to request that School Safety Improvement Teams provide recommendations on how to conduct lock-down and active shooter drills (S.7845);

- A bill to expand the membership of existing required School Safety Improvement Teams to include representatives of the state Division of Homeland Security, State Police, Department of Criminal Justice Services, Office of General Services and Education Department (S.7832);
- Legislation to expand the existing laws in place to prevent school bomb threats so that other types of threats can be prosecuted as well (S.2521); and
- A measure that would increase the penalties for assault or abductions that take place on school grounds, including nursery schools, and college campuses (S.2881).

In addition, Senator Ritchie will soon introduce a bill (S.7816) that would provide teachers and other school personnel who have regular contact with students with wearable, push-button personal safety alarms that once activated, alert first responders to an emergency.

Last year, the Senate successfully extended a 10 percent increase in building aid for schools to fund additional security measures like door hardening, metal detectors, and other related infrastructure. The Senate also secured \$25 million in new funding for non-public schools, day cares, and community centers at risk for hate crimes and \$15 million for non-public schools to increase their security.

The bills will be sent to the Assembly.

## 2017-S7838

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- 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
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Requires the department of education to report information regarding counselors, social workers and psychologists in schools

March 01, 2018

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Patty Ritchie**

Do you support this bill?

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## 2017-S7816

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- 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
- 

Relates to authorizing certain school personnel to wear personal safety alarms

February 28, 2018

In Senate Committee [Rules](#)

Sponsored by [Patty Ritchie](#)

Do you support this bill?