



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SERINO STANDS WITH SCHOOLS

SUSAN SERINO March 6, 2018

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ALBANY, NY—A package of critical school safety measures passed in the State Senate yesterday with the support of area Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park). The package includes measures that would help New York schools hire qualified security personnel; establish funding mechanisms to help schools make infrastructure investments to help them improve school safety; increase access to school-based mental health services; expand state actions and intelligence coordination to better protect schools across the state; and strengthen penalties for crimes that occur on school grounds.

*“The safety and security of our children must always be our highest priority,” said Senator Sue Serino. “As a mom, I know that no parent should have to worry about their child’s safety when they send them off to school—a place that should always be a safe haven. I have spent the last few weeks talking extensively with school officials, law enforcement, students and parents from across our community, and this package represents an important first step to swiftly and directly bolster security in our schools and ensure that they have the resources they need to effectively improve safety for our students.”*

Specifically, the bills aim to increase the ability of schools to hire qualified security personnel by creating a School Resource Officers (SROs) Education Aid Program (S7811A and S7810A), which would provide school districts outside of NYC with state funding to hire a SRO or contract with the state or municipality for their services. These officers would be authorized to carry firearms during the course of their duties.

Additionally, the bills would provide for police officers to be placed in public and private schools in NYC (S6798A), would provide peace officer status for SROs (S1144A), and would increase earning limitations of retired police officers who are employed in schools in an effort to attract trained personnel with extensive experience to these positions (S7791).

The package includes bills that would help schools invest in critical new security technology, including the Security Hardware Aid Program (S7790). This program aims to provide state education aid to school districts for acquiring safety technology and security upgrades. It also includes legislation aimed at improving the Smart School Bond Act Allocation process (S7846) and provides for a new program that would help the state raise funds to continue paying for SROs, security training, security upgrades and mental health counseling (S7847).

Notably, the package would empower schools to invest in critical new mental health services. One bill in particular would create the Mental Health Services Coordinator Aid Program (S7805), which would make public and non-public schools eligible for \$50,000 in state funding to hire a mental health services coordinator to work directly with students, faculty and professionals to identify and report on issues that can pose a public safety risk

both within and beyond schools. Additionally, the package includes a bill that would investigate the current mental health services available in schools, and identify ways in which we can improve to better reach students in need ([S7838](#)).

*“As someone who has seen first-hand the toll that mental health issues can take on an individual and those around them, I cannot stress enough the importance of adequately and fully funding services that effectively identify issues, and provide young people and their families with the tools they need to adequately address these issues,” Senator Serino continued. “We need to be reaching our young people early and often on this front, and these bills send a strong message that mental health matters, and affirms our commitment to making these investments a priority.”*

Further, the package includes measures that would:

- Define school shootings as terrorism and improve intelligence to prevent attacks ([S7813A](#));
- Increase active shooter drills ([S7845](#));
- Upgrade School Safety Improvement Teams ([S7832](#));
- Increase weapon detection capabilities;
- Provide educators and school personnel with Personal Security Alarms to swiftly alert first responders in the event of an emergency; and
- Strengthen penalties for crimes that occur on schools grounds, including the making of threats to cause serious physical harm on schools grounds ([S2881](#) and [S2521](#)).

The package will now be sent to the Assembly for consideration. For more on the legislative package passed in the Senate, visit [nysenate.gov](http://nysenate.gov).

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