



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

Senator Sean Ryan And Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre Urge New York State To Extend Emergency Certification Program For Educators

SEAN M. RYAN July 15, 2021

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SENATOR SEAN RYAN AND ASSEMBLYMEMBER KIMBERLY JEAN-PIERRE URGE NEW YORK STATE TO EXTEND EMERGENCY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR EDUCATORS

Letter To Education Department Outlines Need For Extension Of Program Created To Account For Pandemic-Related Obstacles To Educator Certification

ALBANY – Today, July 15, 2021, New York State Senator Sean Ryan and New York State Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre sent a letter urging the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to extend its Emergency COVID-19 Certificate program past its current September 1 application deadline.

The COVID-19 pandemic created obstacles for educators seeking certification and recertification in New York State. Chief among those obstacles was a limited test center availability for certification exams. NYSED recognized these challenges and made temporary emergency changes to certification requirements in May 2020 to account for the difficult circumstances surrounding certification during the pandemic. The Emergency COVID-19 Certificate is available to a wide variety of educators including classroom teachers, librarians, school administrators, teaching assistants, school athletics coaches, GED instructors, and jobs skills training instructors.

However, with the application deadline for the Emergency COVID-19 Certificate approaching, lingering pandemic-related impediments continue to make it difficult for educators to complete the certification process. As a result, Senator Ryan and Assemblymember Jean-Pierre, who are respectively Chairs of the Senate and Assembly Libraries committees, have called on NYSED to extend the application deadline from September 1, 2021 to September 1, 2024 to provide ample time for educators in New York State to get back on track following a pandemic that has disrupted life for the last 16 months.

Senator Sean Ryan said, “With current staffing shortages in our schools, it’s important that we remove any unnecessary impediments to hiring qualified candidates. NYSED has already taken important measures to account for the impact of the pandemic on the certification process, but extending the application deadline for the Emergency COVID-19 Certificate would help ensure that all educators struggling to get recertified because of the pandemic have a fair chance to meet the state requirements.”

Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre said, “As we approach the beginning of a new school year, the ability to hire qualified education professionals is paramount to ensuring that our schools can provide the critical services our schoolchildren need to thrive. Unfortunately, the ongoing pandemic has disrupted the recertification process for many of these candidates, and I sincerely thank the New York State Education Department for providing the initial flexibility through the Emergency COVID-19 Certificate. Given the continued time constraints and backlogs associated with this process, extending this application deadline to 2024 will allow these individuals to properly re-certify while also meeting the necessary state requirements that are essential for the successful education of our children.”

Briana McNamee, Director of Government Relations & Advocacy of the New York Library Association, said, “By extending the application deadline for emergency certifications, more of New York’s students will have access to certified school librarians than would otherwise be possible – certified school librarians that will ensure that their students gain critical information-, digital-, and media-literacy skills.”

Mike Cornell, Superintendent of the Hamburg Central School District, said, “School superintendents are grateful that State Senator Ryan pays such close attention to the needs of public educators. Extending this deadline is critically important for school districts as we continue in our efforts to attract the most talented people to our classrooms.”

A copy of the legislators’ letter appears below:

July 15, 2021

Dr. Betty A. Rosa

Commissioner

New York State Education Department

89 Washington Ave., 5N EB

Albany, New York 12234

Re: Emergency Certification Program Extension Request

Dear Commissioner Rosa:

We write today regarding the State Education Department's emergency certification program, and the need for an extension. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have watched as teachers and other educators have stepped up in extraordinary ways despite the obstacles and demands of a public health crisis. The negative impact of COVID-19 on schools, educators, and students has been profound and ongoing. One such impact has been the inability for individuals to meet the requirements for teaching re-certifications. While the State Education Department recognized these obstacles to recertification and established an emergency certification program, few were made aware of the option – until recently. Thus, an extension of the application deadline is necessary to give valid candidates the opportunity to meet their certification and recertification requirements - given the barriers created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to limited test center availability for certification exams during the pandemic, the creation of an emergency certification program has been vitally important. We appreciate the fact that the validity period for the Emergency COVID-19 certificate has been extended to two years, and the fact that new Emergency certificates issued in the future will be valid for two years. The remaining concern we have is that applications for new Emergency certificates are only being accepted through September 1, 2021. We are just now emerging from this pandemic. People's lives have been radically altered and our state and our nation have quite a bit of rebuilding to do. Extending the application period for new Emergency certificates to September 1, 2024 will provide the necessary time for our educators to get back on track following a pandemic that has disrupted all of our lives for the last 16 months.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and thank you for all you do for the people of the State of New York.

Sincerely,

Sean M. Ryan

New York State Senator - District 60

Kimberly Jean-Pierre

New York State Assemblymember – District 11

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