



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

## Senator Borrello Drafts Bill to Reimburse SUNY/CUNY Students

GEORGE M. BORRELLO April 20, 2022

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19; SUNY, CUNY**



ALBANY – Sen. George Borrello is sponsoring legislation ([S.8755](#)) to reimburse State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) students forced to abandon their studies by SUNY’s COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

On Aug. 23, 2021, SUNY announced that all students must have proof of vaccination to remain enrolled. Students were given 35 days, until Sept. 27, to comply or submit vaccination exemption requests based on medical or religious grounds.

“More than 1,500 students were forced out of SUNY schools, disenrolled because they were unable to comply with SUNY’s vaccine mandate. Many of these students had applied for medical or religious exemptions. It’s unconscionable that SUNY would keep their money after kicking them out of school,” Sen. Borrello said.

Sen. Borrello’s legislation would amend Section 1 of State Education Law to allow reimbursement for SUNY students attending an institution of higher learning, who were disenrolled due to the COVID vaccination status for any cost of enrollment and for any term they were disenrolled from. SUNY received 8,134 vaccine exemption requests, 7,048 religious and 1,086 medical. According to SUNY, 74.5 percent were approved and 1,516 students were disenrolled for failure to comply with the mandate or gain exemption.

“I support the vaccine as a personal choice. If SUNY wishes to restrict this low-risk group then they should refund all fees and expenses,” Sen. Borrello said. “This was a disproportionate, severe sanction SUNY handed down to these students. It’s disappointing that no attempt was made to accommodate these students so they could continue their studies. Students who were not approved for an exemption and decided not to comply with the mandate should not be financially punished because of a personal, medical decision.”

While private colleges and universities in New York also instituted vaccine requirements, they were announced earlier or gave students more time to comply. For Barnard College, the announcement was made on April 19, 2021, and the vaccine requirement did not go into effect until the fall semester. NYU and Columbia University also announced vaccine mandates on the same day.

“Students attending private universities were given much more time to weigh their options and make difficult decisions about their future. Students attending SUNY schools were not given the same liberties,” Sen. Borrello said. “The 35-day window simply didn’t give SUNY students enough time to comply with SUNY’s vaccine mandate or their exemption process. This is another example of the powers that be in state government ruling by edict.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2021-S8755

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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 reimbursement of students who were disenrolled from the state university of New York or the city university of New York due to their COVID-19 vaccination status

April 11, 2022

In Senate Committee [Higher Education](#)

Sponsored by [George M. Borrello](#)

Do you support this bill?