



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin Thomas

## Governor Hochul Signs Legislation Preventing Colleges From Withholding Student Transcripts Because Of Unpaid Debts

KEVIN THOMAS May 4, 2022

| ISSUE: **TRANSCRIPT WITHHOLDING, TRANSCRIPT RANSOMING, HIGHER EDUCATION, STUDENT DEBT, STUDENT LOANS**

| COMMITTEE: **CONSUMER PROTECTION**



Governor Kathy Hochul today signed legislation S.5924-C/A.6938-B that prohibits colleges from withholding a student's transcript because of unpaid debts or charging individuals who owe debts a higher fee to obtain their transcript. This legislation ensures that students can access their transcript when necessary so that they may continue their education or find a job.

“Transcripts are critical for students to continue pursuing their educational and career goals,” **Governor Hochul said**. “To hold transcripts hostage until outstanding debts are paid is an unfair, predatory practice that prevents our students from reaching their full potential. I was proud to make ending transcript withholding a top priority and took action to end this practice at SUNY and CUNY in January. Today, we put an end to this abhorrent policy for all higher education institutions to ensure a level playing field for New York’s students.”

The tactic of withholding student transcripts or overcharging for their release has been used by some colleges in the state to leverage collection of outstanding debts, however one is not related to the other. Withholding a student’s transcript is a punitive measure that penalizes students with less resources, while ironically making it more difficult for them to advance in higher education or obtain employment that will allow them to make outstanding payments.

Governor Hochul made the proposal to end this practice in her [2022 State of the State Address](#). In January, the Governor announced that the [SUNY board](#) and [CUNY board](#) voted to end the practice.

**State Senator Kevin Thomas said**, “Transcripts are a record of a students’ education – they are not and were never meant to be tools for debt collection. Transcript withholding is a disruptive, counter-productive, and harmful practice that prevents students from being able to transfer credits, re-enroll in school to finish their degrees, or obtain jobs that could help them pay their balances. Each withheld transcript represents a student who was denied the opportunity to pursue a chosen career path, denied access to social and economic mobility through higher education, and ultimately denied access to the American Dream. I thank Governor Hochul for signing this important legislation to stop the practice of transcript withholding and empower students across New York State.”

**Assemblymember Harvey Epstein said,** "Today's a great moment for students in New York. No longer will students be punished as they try to advance in their academic and professional careers. Removing the barrier of transcript withholding will help get students into the next step in their lives, while they work to meet their obligations to their schools. I'm proud to have worked with Senator Kevin Thomas, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Higher Education, Deborah Glick, and many higher education advocates to pass this legislation. I want to thank the Governor for standing up for students by signing our bill."

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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## **2021-S5924C**

[student debt](#), [student loans](#), [Thomas D. Croci](#), [Higher Education](#)

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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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Relates to prohibited practices relating to student educational debt

March 23, 2021

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by [Kevin Thomas](#)

Do you support this bill?