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December 20, 2024

Phil Kassen
President
NYSAIS
17 Elk Street (First Floor)
Albany, NY 12207

Dear President Kassen:

I write on behalf of parents in my Senate District on the West Side of Manhattan.

Once again, independent schools are operating on a different winter vacation calendar than public schools, presenting parents with daunting logistical hurdles. Many of those who have children enrolled in both public and private school must take off extra time from work or pay for additional child care. Family holiday plans are often dashed.

Given these severe burdens for parents, I urge the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS) to take all feasible steps to ensure its members align their educational calendars with their local public school districts.

Parents with children in both public and private schools must make nontrivial sacrifices come vacation time, including forgoing much-needed wages or constricting an already tight holiday budget. These burdens fall disproportionately on women and people of color. According to the United States Department of Labor, women are more likely to need and take leave to take care of another individual. Women who take leave are also less likely to be paid during that time period. According to the Urban Institute, only 58% of Hispanic adults have access to paid leave, compared to 72% of white workers. Disparate public and private school calendars force households to take even more unpaid leave, enhancing any preexisting economic disadvantage.

Diverging vacation schedules also stifle the opportunity for shared family experiences – the foundation for a child’s emotional and social health. Parents are faced

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with an impossible choice to pull a student out of school or to forgo holiday celebrations as a family. Disparate school calendars are not just painful – they are unnecessary. By synchronizing vacation calendars with public school districts, independent schools could leave families with one less burden and make the holiday seasons a little more joyful.

Thank you for your dedication to New York State's students. I would be eager to speak to you about this important matter at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Hoylman-Sigal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brad Hoylman-Sigal
NYS Senator - 47th District