

Education Advocates Urge Legislature to Expand School Discipline Reforms in Proposed Budget

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 5, 2019

CONTACT:

New York Civil Liberties Union:
Naomi Dann, ndann@nyclu.org, 212-607-3309

Alliance for Quality Education:
Julia Watson, julia@aqeny.org, 518-432-5315

Advocates for Children of New York:
Sarah Part, spart@advocatesforchildren.org, (212) 822-9517

Committee for Hispanic Children and Families:
Danielle Demeuse, DDemeuse@chcfinc.org, 212-206-1090

Student Advocacy:
Karen Blumenthal, Kblumenthal@studentadvocacy.net, (914) 347-7039 x. 112

ALBANY, N.Y. — Ahead of a public hearing on proposed education funding in the New York state budget, the Safe and Supportive Schools Coalition urges lawmakers to expand support for school discipline reforms. Education advocates, community organizations and civil rights groups have called for an investment of \$50 million dollars into school climate improvement measures, through legislation known as the Safe and Supportive Schools Act (A.1981/S.0767).

The Governor's budget proposal included \$3 million dollars for school discipline reform measures, including resources for teachers and school administrators to address student mental health, supports for alternatives to exclusionary discipline, and legislation to require school districts to reduce and regulate the role of police officers in schools. Education justice advocates welcome the Governor's support but stress that the budget proposal must go further. Advocates call for the reforms to include a prohibition on suspending students in Kindergarten through third grade, an end to suspensions for minor infractions, a limit of 20 days for out-of-school suspensions, and an increase in positive behavioral supports and interventions for students.

A joint Senate and Assembly hearing on the education components of the state budget will take place in Albany on February 6.

The following comments are attributable to members of the Safe and Supportive Schools Coalition:

Johanna Miller, New York Civil Liberties Union's Education Policy Center:

"Taking police out of the role of disciplinarians and investing in student mental health are critical steps on the path to ending the school-to-prison pipeline. But we have further to go to ensure that students' right to an education is not disrupted by unnecessary or lengthy suspensions, or by school safety strategies that unfairly impact students of color."

Charlotte Pope, Children’s Defense Fund – New York:

“These proposals are much needed and open up the possibility for real changes in the lives of young people most targeted by school pushout. Unfortunately, it is because discipline disparities are so severe and deeply felt across New York State that these proposals are welcomed and necessary. We must continue to move toward comprehensive school climate reform and ensure that all students have access to schools that are safe, restorative, and healing.”

Student Advocacy:

We are encouraged by the Governor’s stated goal of ending the school-to-prison pipeline in New York State. One of the best ways to accomplish this is for the legislature to pass and the Governor to sign the Judge Judith S. Kaye Safe and Supportive Schools Bill (A. 1981/S. 0767).

Andrew Hairston, Advancement Project:

“Unfortunately, the school-to-prison pipeline remains alive and well in New York. Black and Brown students, LGBTQIA+ youth, and children with disabilities are often disproportionately pushed out of school for low-level disciplinary infractions. They are also frequently criminalized and harassed by school police officers. Although the Governor’s \$3 million commitment to improve school climate throughout the state is a step in the right direction, we urge him to allocate the \$50 million originally requested for this effort. Additionally, we urge the New York Legislature to pass the Judith Kaye Safe and Supportive Schools Bill as soon as practicable.”

Martha Kamber, YWCA of Brooklyn:

“As an organization that works directly with the population most affected by suspensions we see, first-hand, the devastating effects such policies have on our youth. We are sabotaging their future by failing to address the root of the problem. Suspensions do not address the issue; they delay it. We stand with our partners in support of a \$50 million allocation towards more progressive disciplinary approaches.”

Rebecca Shore, Advocates for Children of New York:

“While we are encouraged that the Governor included in his proposed budget funding for training teachers and school staff on alternatives to suspension, including restorative practices and positive behavioral supports, the proposed amount in the budget is not enough to meet the needs of the state. An allocation of the recommended \$50 million along with passage of the Safe and Supportive Schools Act is necessary.”

Jasmine Gripper, Alliance for Quality Education:

“Last year a NY teacher stepped on a Black student during a lesson on the enslavement of African people in the United States. This year a NY school strip searched young Black girls for giggling suspiciously. It is evident that NY lawmakers need to act fast to increase protections for our most vulnerable students. The legislature must pass the Safe and Supportive Schools act and invest \$50 million in positive school climate initiatives.”

The Safe and Supportive Schools coalition includes Advancement Project, Advocates for Children of New York, Alliance for Quality Education, Children’s Defense Fund, Citizen Action of New York, Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, The Legal Aid Society, Make the Road New York, New York Civil Liberties Union, Student Advocacy, Urban Youth Collaborative and the YWCA of Brooklyn.