



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

Governor Signs Bill Sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer and Assembly Member Carrie Woerner to Require School Boards to Appoint a Non-Voting Student Member

SENATOR SHELLEY B. MAYER September 6, 2024

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION, SCHOOL BOARDS**

(*Albany, New York*) Governor Kathy Hochul signed key legislation sponsored by Senator Shelley B. Mayer and Assembly Member Carrie Woerner to require every school board and Board of Cooperative Education Services in New York State to appoint at least one student ex-officio member.

Through Mayer and Woerner's legislation, [S.9018A/A.9855A](#), school boards will now be *required* to appoint at least one student ex-officio member who may participate in all public meetings and sit with the other board members. These student members will be non-voting and will not be entitled to participate in Executive sessions or any other non-public proceedings.

Prior to this law, districts were *allowed* to appoint an ex-officio student member, but had to seek approval from voters in their district via a referendum. This legislation simplifies the process, removing the referendum requirement and giving districts greater flexibility about how they appoint members. Further, it will expand opportunities statewide for students to participate in their school board by ensuring every district has at least one student member.

Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, “I am proud my bill to require school districts and BOCES to appoint at least one student non-voting school board member has been signed into law by Governor Hochul. Today, students navigate a myriad of challenges in their lives at home and school. Some of these challenges are familiar to those of us who were high school students decades ago. Others may not be — the impact of social media, experience of social isolation since the pandemic, or fear and anxiety about the climate crisis. This legislation will ensure that students have a seat at the table where decisions that shape their educational opportunities and experience are made and that members of the Board hear and benefit from their insights as students. I want to thank Assembly Member Woerner for sponsoring this legislation in the Assembly and Governor Kathy Hochul for signing it into law.”

Assembly Member Carrie Woerner said, “As a former high school student School Board member, I know first-hand what a wonderful experience it was to be my school’s student representative and to be able to offer students’ perspectives on all School Board-related topics. Students are important stakeholders and I’m pleased to have partnered with Senator Mayer in ensuring they now have a place and a voice at the table in School Boards across the state.”

Grace Evans, a former Ex-Officio School Board member for Jamesville-DeWitt School District in Syracuse, said, “Education is a means to understanding and knowing the world. The spaces that it occupies are meant for exploration, invention, and creation. That these environments are thoughtfully and intentionally constructed is imperative to creating positive learning and living experiences. This legislation ensures that the student voice is centered in making decisions about the detailed and broader ongoing in districts, which, in turn, affect both the daily and longer-term lives of students. My own experience as a Student Board Representative gave me a layered and developed perspective on the education system and social issues that play into it, as well as important skills that continue to guide the way that I communicate, collaborate, lead, and live, on the largest scale. It has given me more

opportunities than I could've ever imagined, including this one, to aid in making sure that all students have access to the same meaningful and impactful experience that I had.”

Assemblyman Steve Otis, a cosponsor of the new law, said, “Providing students with an ex officio seat at the table at school board meetings has several benefits. A student perspective may provide important information on an issue where student knowledge would be helpful towards reaching the best decisions. Public participation of a student representative should also increase the flow of information to all students on issues affecting their education. The experience will also enhance the education of the student appointed. Congratulations to Governor Hochul and to lead sponsors Senator Shelley Mayer and Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner ex officio for moving this legislation.

This law will take effect July 1, 2025.

The requirements of this bill apply to Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers, all Union Free School Districts, Central School Districts that operate a high school, Central High School Districts, Small City School Districts, and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services. New York City does not have a school board; but current law requires both Community Education Councils and the Citywide Councils to give students the opportunity to participate as non-voting members.