



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Steven D. Rhoads

# **Members of Long Island Senate Republican Conference, Local Elected Officials, Superintendents and Coalition of NYS School Board Members Oppose NYSED Regionalization Plan and Fight To Preserve Local Control Over School Districts**

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November 21, 2024



**Mineola, NY** – Senator Steve Rhoads, Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, members of the Long Island Senate Republican Conference, Local Elected Officials, Superintendents and Coalition of NYS School Board members stand united to preserve local control over school districts and block state-mandated regionalization plans. This plan by the New York State Education Department and Board of Regents threatens to force school districts to “pool” resources, programs, and services—potentially compromising educational quality and administrative independence.

**A press conference took place Thursday, November 21, 2024, at 11:30 a.m. at the Nassau County Executive Building, 1550 Franklin Ave, Mineola NY 11501,** to discuss the significance and detrimental impact that this plan will have on our schools across Long Island and New York State.

Local solutions should come from within the community, rather than outsiders that risk our education system and take away our district's ability to make decisions by the people we elect and trust. Who knows the specific needs of our students better than our own?

“The State Education Department’s self-created “emergency” Regionalization mandate is vague, confusing and can easily lead to a complete usurpation of local control of school budgets, tax dollars and educational opportunities and resources vested in local Boards of Education. Long Islanders pay some of the highest school taxes in the State and their local and State elected officials should and must have a voice in how those dollars are spent and where. That voice is being jeopardized by the SED’s rushed, top-down Regionalization Plan. I stand united with my colleagues in government, teachers, school board members, school administrators and thousands of local parents and taxpayers who have grave concerns and firmly oppose the SED’s mandate. I will fight with them to get answers, protect local control, reclaim the rights of our communities to be heard and ensure that every student’s needs are met with the personalized and local attention that they demand and deserve.” **said Senator Rhoads (SD5).**

“Long Island schools are regularly ranked among the very best in New York State. That fact is due in large part to our local control and educational structure, which prioritizes our students’ success. Schools are the backbone of Long Island and define our economic, social and cultural structures. They drive property values, economic growth, and influence civic engagement and even public services. We join our local communities in opposing any effort to force regionalization and fight to preserve local control.” **said Senator Martins (SD7).**

“Once again, Albany is proposing to push top-down mandates that erode control local residents have over their schools and communities. Locally elected boards of education are chosen by their communities to make decisions that meet the educational needs of their students, and I will continue to oppose any efforts that would shift decision-making authority further away from the local communities.” **said Senator Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick (SD9).**

"Once again, it appears that Albany is looking for ways to circumvent local control... this time in our local school districts. This regionalization mandate that is being rammed through will basically allow the State Education Department to make decisions that will not only ignore our duly elected school boards but will also make

decisions that will directly impact our children's educational opportunities and our taxpayers' pocketbooks," **said Senator Dean Murray (SD3).**

"NYSED's overreach into mandating regionalization plans undermines the foundation of local control that has been central to New York's education system for generations. This radical plan has the potential to force taxpayers to support schools outside of their districts, stripping communities of their autonomy and disregarding their voices. I will continue to fight against this sweeping redistribution of resources to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent where they belong—on the students and schools in their own districts." **said Senator Mattera (SD2).**

"This is the Bail Reform of education, bad policy being forced onto our communities with vague, unclear mandates. Local control has never failed us, and we intend to maintain our fight against this." **said Senator Weik (SD8).**

"Any changes to the State's educational system must protect local control, allow schools to opt in or out, and ensure a fair distribution of education aid to address the many challenges facing school districts on Long Island and throughout New York. The Albany centric, top-down approach, has been a failure on a number of issues, including common core, and I believe students, teachers and districts would be better served by fewer, and not more directives from state bureaucrats." **said Senator Palumbo (SD1).**

A few weeks ago, Senator Jack M. Martins and Assemblyman Jake Blumencranz announced the introduction of the *Our Schools, Our Rules Act*, legislation aimed at preserving local control over school districts and blocking state-mandated regionalization plans.

### **The Our Schools, Our Rules Act:**

- **Prohibits** the development or implementation of state-mandated regionalization plans.

- **Protects** districts from being forced to share resources, administrative operations, or instructional services under any state directive.
- **Nullifies** any current or future state regulations that require mandatory regionalization.
- **Allows** districts to voluntarily collaborate with other districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), charter, or private schools without state compulsion.
- **Guarantees** local school boards retain full decision-making authority over governance and budgeting.

The “*Our Schools, Our Rules Act*” reflects Long Island’s tradition of maintaining high educational standards through locally controlled governance. Until it is clear from the Governor that this plan will not be imposed upon our school districts, we will continue to fight for our local control and for our children.