



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mario R. Mattera

Senator Mattera Joins With Nassau County Executive Blakeman, Senator Martins, Senate Republican Conference, Elected Officials, Superintendents And Coalition Of NYS School Board Members To Oppose NYSED Regionalization Plan To Preserve Local Control

MARIO R. MATTERA November 21, 2024

| ISSUE: **SCHOOLS; EDUCATION; NYSED, NYSED REGIONALIZATION, LONG ISLAND SCHOOLS, LONG ISLAND TAXPAYERS, LOCAL CONTROL**

November 21, 2024 Senate Republicans Oppose Regionalization

Senator Mario R. Mattera (2nd Senate District) joined his colleague Senator Jack Martins (7th Senate District), 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 (NYSED) and Board of Regents threatens to force school districts to “pool” resources, programs, and services—potentially compromising educational quality, administrative independence and the rights of our local taxpayers.

Together, they denounced the effort at a **press conference at the Nassau County Executive Building in Mineola and discussed** the significance and detrimental impact that this plan will have on our schools across Long Island and New York State.

9

“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.**

“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.**

The potential changes were **introduced by NYSED** through emergency rule making and published in the **New York State Registry on September 25, 2024**. This so-called emergency rule making for the purpose of mandating the development and implementation of “Regionalization Plans” for each supervisory school district to formulate and administer in New York State could have a very chilling impact on local control in Long Island school district. According to the information published in the Register, NYSED intends to – without any meaningful public comment period – immediately enact this broad and sweeping program which would fundamentally change resource allocation among our school districts.

According to the proposed rules, the Department of Education will mandate that every supervisory school district in New York State, except the so-called “Big Five” school districts (New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers), develop and administer a plan to share and reallocate resources between different school districts. This scheme is

fundamentally unfair to taxpayers within each individual school district, as their school property tax dollars would likely no longer be exclusively used for schools within a single district but, rather, would be spread out over other districts.

Historically, local control over our school districts has been the centerpiece of our education system in New York State. The Department of Education's proposed radical action takes much of that away and, along with it, unfairly mandates the redistribution of our property owners' taxpayer funds to schools which they would not otherwise be obligated to support.

It is clear that Long Island school property taxes should be spent solely on the school districts in which taxpayers' properties are located. This is how our educational funding system in New York State has historically been constructed, and those assembled are fighting to protect this Long Island right.

"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 Patricia Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick (9th Senate District).**

"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 Steven Rhoads (5th Senate District).**

"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 (3rd Senate District).**

"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 Alexis Weik (8th Senate District).**

"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 (1st Senate District).**

Senator Mattera has cosponsored legislation proposed by Senator Martins, which is cosponsored in the New York State Assembly by Assemblyman Jake Blumencranz (15th Assembly District), called the *Our Schools, Our Rules Act*. The 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 NYSED that this plan will not be imposed upon our school districts, we will continue to fight for our local control and for our children.