



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

Senate Education Committee Examines Teacher Discipline Process

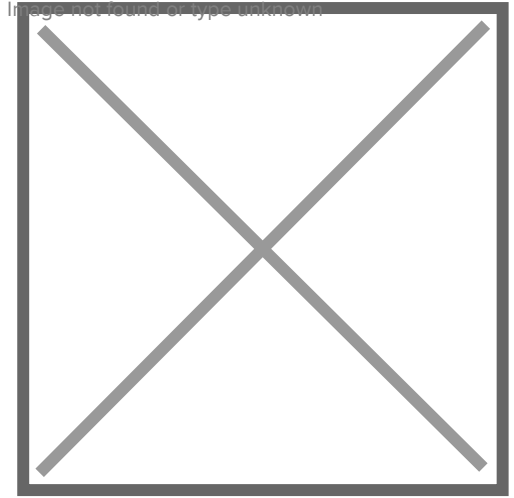
JOHN J. FLANAGAN May 24, 2011

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In an effort to streamline the teacher discipline system to protect educational quality for students across the state, Senator John Flanagan, Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, convened a hearing of the New York State Senate Education Committee to examine the current system. The “Due Process Teacher Discipline Without Delay: Reforming Section 3020-a of the Education Law to Meet the Needs of the 21st Century” accepted testimony from interested parties in an effort to examine how New York State can reform the system to provide the appropriate discipline for educator misconduct as well as the appropriate protection for those wrongfully accused.



The 3020-a disciplinary hearing process provides tenured teachers and administrators across New York State with due process in all disciplinary hearings. As has been noted in the media, it can be a lengthy and sometimes frustratingly deliberative system that has inhibited schools from acting in the best interest of the students that they serve. It can also be a frustrating undertaking for good-standing educators who have been charged with misconduct but who are ultimately cleared of any wrongdoing.

“This is an opportunity to openly discuss an area that clearly needs to be improved. From talking to those who are intimately involved, I’m not sure any of them feel that the current process is working the way that it should. That is bad for the teachers, it is bad for the taxpayers and, most importantly, that is bad for the children of the state. This hearing will provide us with a good point to begin discussing the ways we can improve it and it is important that we work together to get the fairest and most expedient process possible,” stated Senator Flanagan.

The hearing, which was held in Albany, provided both sides in the debate with an opportunity to provide their input on the situation and to work to find a system that is fair for all involved as well as to study the impact any changes would have on school children, taxpayers and the school system as a whole.

Among the witnesses who testified at the hearing were New York City Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott, New York State Education Department Chief Executive Officer Val Grey, and New York State United Teachers Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta.

In discussing the issue, Chancellor Walcott was clear about the need to reform the system; “What we must have is a fair and rational, speedy, cost-effective process that allows us to take prompt action on discipline. The 3020-a system right now as currently structured is long and arduous, requires substantial resources and often results in inconsistent outcomes.”

Testimony was also received from representatives from the New York State School Boards Association, New York State Council of School Superintendents, Conference of Big 5 School Districts, New York State Association of School Attorneys and Council of School Supervisors & Administrators.

“Education is clearly New York State’s number one obligation and, at the end of the day, there is nothing more important than having the most competent and qualified professional teachers in the classroom helping kids. At the end of the day, that should override everything else that we may talk about and that is why we held this hearing today,” concluded Chairman Flanagan.

To view video of the hearing in its entirety, [please click here](#).