



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

Squadron Announces Senate Education Committee Passage of Bill Allowing Schools to Close on Lunar New Year

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ALBANY – State Senator Daniel Squadron announced today that the Senate Education Committee has passed legislation he's long pushed that allows schools to close on Lunar New Year.

Schools in neighborhoods with large Asian American populations, such as Chinatown in Manhattan and Flushing in Queens, report large numbers of absences on Lunar New Year. This year, P.S. 130, P.S. 124, and P.S. 2 in Lower Manhattan all reported absence rates of roughly 70 percent.

Approximately one in six New York City public school students are Asian American. Currently, students who celebrate the Lunar New Year holiday receive an "excused" absence, meaning they miss a full day of classes and have the absence marked on their record. This legislation would require that the city Department of Education (DOE) consider closing schools if a holiday is likely to result in "a considerable proportion" of students being absent.

"It's time for our school calendar to finally reflect New York's diversity," said **Senator Daniel Squadron**. "We've long pushed to create a Lunar New Year school holiday because a huge number of kids celebrate and are forced to choose between missing their most important holiday with their family, or missing school. With one of every six New York City public school students Asian American, it's time to finally recognize this important holiday. I'm glad to be working with Senator Golden, Speaker Silver, and Assemblyman Kim to finally make a Lunar New Year school holiday a reality for families around our city. Committee passage is a key step forward. Now, I urge my colleagues in the Senate to quickly bring this bill to the floor."

"New York City is proud to be one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world and it is crucial that we honor and support that diversity, which is why we passed this bill in the State Assembly and I look forward to seeing it become law," said **Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver**. "In our Lower Manhattan community, Lunar New Year is a day of great celebration and, frequently, empty classrooms. We must send the message that we value people of all backgrounds, all religions and all cultures. Parents should not have to choose between celebrating their cultural heritage and interfering with their children's learning time."

"Lunar New Year is one of the most significant cultural holidays for Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, and other Asian ethnic groups . . . while Lunar New Year Day is recognized as an official day of commemoration in New York, public schools that have a considerable proportion of students that do not attend school due to this cultural holiday do not close for that day," said **Assemblyman Ron Kim**. "It may be impractical to keep the public schools open in Asian communities where there is a significant number of students and instructors who take the day off. This Bill allows

school districts more freedom to accommodate the needs of their students. If the Bill passes, it will be a relief to students and families throughout the city who often struggle with pulling their kids out of school on important, though not nationally recognized, holidays. This is a step toward making sure that public policy reflects New York City's cultural and religious diversity, and its awareness and embracement of such diversity."

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