



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

The New York Post Published One of My Articles

SEN. RUBEN DIAZ December 2, 2016

City Hall must stop denying space to great new schools

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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The New York Post Published One of My Articles

You should know that on Thursday, December 1, 2016, the New York Post published one of my *What You Should Know* columns titled “City Hall must stop denying space to great new schools.”

I invite everyone to read it here, and welcome your thoughts and comments.

I am Senator Reverend Rubén Díaz, and this is what you should know.

City Hall must stop denying space to great new schools

By Senator Reverend Rubén Díaz

December 1, 2016

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When I moved to New York City from Bayamon, Puerto Rico, I knew the key to opportunity was going to be a good education.

To be sure, I cared deeply as a young man about health care, economic opportunity and poverty. But my ability to rise through the ranks as a Hispanic leader in New York City in order to tackle those issues was only possible because I was able to get an education that prepared me for the challenges ahead.

Unfortunately, too few of my constituents have that opportunity today, and part of the reason is that policymakers are failing to make space for high-quality alternatives in our public schools. Just 38 percent of the city's middle-schoolers are proficient in reading — and barely a quarter of black and Hispanic children read at grade level.

This is a moral crisis and should spur us all to action. And it can't simply be solved by throwing money at it: A quarter of New York City's budget is spent on public schools each year, amounting to some \$23 billion for 1 million schoolchildren. The problem isn't money — it's that we aren't giving equal resources to public charter schools, even though they're doing excellent work for our boys and girls.

The results speak for themselves. Nine of the 10 best public schools in Bronx County are public charters. The support for public charter schools among my Bronx constituents has never been higher. More than 20,000 boys and girls are on charter-school waitlists in Bronx County, which is home to three of the five city districts with the longest waitlists. With public charters, we have an opportunity to help our neediest children get a high-quality education right now.

So what's the problem? Why aren't we doing everything in our power to give children an opportunity to attend these schools? Put simply: We are literally failing to make space for

high-quality alternatives.

It's not as if we don't know what it takes to open a new school: hire qualified staff; assemble a dynamic, innovative curriculum; engage with parents and community leaders. But when trying to find students classroom and building space, public charters in New York City face endless delays. This would be inexcusable under any circumstances when you face an enormous achievement gap, but in a city with 150,000 open seats and 32 buildings each with over 300 empty seats in Bronx County alone, it's downright shocking.

And unfortunately, City Hall has no plan to provide space for all the new schools that need it and to remove the endless delays that new schools face when trying to find their students space.

Real progressive leadership isn't about protecting the status quo. It's about refusing to accept inequality wherever it exists — and whatever may be causing it. We are always strongest when we have a vision big enough and bold enough to make space for the best ideas to help the most people.

That's the kind of leadership our city needs. At a moment when public charters are offering parents seeking a better option more choice, a comprehensive plan to quickly put our city's highest-need kids in the classroom at the high-quality schools they deserve should be a no-brainer.

For me, it's simple: Giving 44,000 boys and girls across New York City the chance to taste opportunity for themselves is not only the right thing to do, it's the only thing to do.

I am Senator Rubén Díaz and this is what you should know.