



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elaine Phillips

# Senator Phillips Welcomes Westbury Union Free School District Students To State Capital

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March 29, 2018



Senator Elaine Phillips hosted students and several school board trustees from the Westbury Union Free School District at the State Capital today. The group came to Albany to advocate for an increase in school foundation aid in the state budget.

"In my first year as State Senator, I was able to deliver a record increase in school aid to my district and Westbury received the highest increase," Senator Phillips said. "I know they need additional funding and I have been working hard to bring home more of our fair share this year. Our students deserve the highest quality of education possible and I remain committed to making sure schools like Westbury have the funding resources they need to make that happen."

Pedro Quintanilla, Westbury Board of Education Trustee said, "The students have become aware of the funding gap that their school district is suffering, so on Tuesday afternoon they started to organize this trip to Albany on their own. They had an online fundraiser to pay for the bus and asked myself and a few other board members to chaperone. They traveled to the Capital to advocate and impress upon the need to have equity. I would like to thank Senator Phillips for her unwavering and consistent support of our school District. From day one she has tried to ensure that Westbury receives equitable foundation aid."

Dr. Stanton Brown, Westbury Board of Education Trustee said, "The students are here advocating for themselves to get foundation aid to 55% after they realized they were being shortchanged. They did it without the school's help, they did it locally within 24 hours and they arranged the trip so they could come to Albany to relay their plight and hope for the best. We are indebted to Senator Phillips for her efforts toward Westbury and particularly for her support in getting these kids to Albany today for this great opportunity for them to express their concerns."

The students visited the Senate Chamber and toured the State Capitol with Senator Phillips before sitting down and discussing their concerns with the Senator and local Assembly members.

"Late yesterday afternoon, I received a phone call indicating that 40-50 Westbury students were trying to get to Albany to meet with myself and members of the Assembly to advocate on behalf of an increase in foundation aid and I offered my assistance to make that happen," said Senator Elaine Phillips. "I truly believe that the future of our state and nation depends upon the participation and interest of our youth and I applaud the students for taking the initiative and arranging this trip on

their own. It was a pleasure to spend time speaking about foundation aid, the history of the Gap Elimination Adjustment, and the needs of the district with this engaged and intelligent group of young individuals."

Jessica Ellis, 11th Grade, President Westbury Student Council said, "We voiced our concerns today and I hope the legislators listened to what we had to say. We had many conversations and hope that they give us the foundation aid we deserve. We didn't come here for 100%, but we want the 55% we are owed that will give us enough to operate our buildings and have the high school experience we deserve."

Jahshua Taylor, 11th Grade, President of the Time for Action Initiative and Junior Administrator said, "We're here today to advocate for the students who attend Westbury High School. I believe that we are underfunded due to us being poor. I believe we came on the right day, at the right time, because this is the day they are going to take everything into consideration. There should be no such thing as 'high needs' - we just have to find a way to prioritize money in New York."

Brenda Odon, Advisor & Westbury Community Organizer said. "This is not a school-funded event. The children, as well as myself, have been very active in the community attending school board meetings and expressing our concerns. They didn't come to learn today, they came to make a statement. And the statement is Westbury is underfunded. They're here because they want to express to elected officials that they are paying attention, and they're here to say don't forget about us."

"Today was a great learning experience for both the Westbury students and myself. I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the district's needs from the student's perspective and I will continue to advocate on their behalf. I look forward to meeting with the students, trustees and administrators again in the near future," said Senator Phillips.