



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

# Taking Steps Towards Safer Schools

Senator Patty Ritchie

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Every day, parents across New York State send their children off to school to develop the knowledge, experience and skills they need to be successful in the future. School should be many things, educational, fun, and most importantly, safe. No parent or guardian should ever have to worry about his or her child being in harm's way while in the classroom.

As state senator, one of my top priorities—especially in recent years—has been the safety of our children. Ensuring their safety and that they are able to learn, as well as have fun in school, is now more important than ever.

Recently, I was proud to announce funding for an initiative that will help create a safer environment in our schools for educators, teachers and staff. Thanks to \$500,000 in support, teachers and key staff members in schools throughout the 48<sup>th</sup> Senate District will soon have wearable, push button safety alarms. These devices allow users to easily alert authorities in the case of any emergency, including a fight, a medical situation, a fire or a student safety concern. In all, more than 4,000 of these alarms will be distributed across schools in Jefferson, St. Lawrence and Oswego Counties.

This safety enhancement is just the start of the work we need to do to improve the safety of our schools. During the most recent legislative session, I was proud to advocate for other security efforts, including the restoration of a program—known as the School Resource Officer Program—that places law enforcement officers inside schools to enhance security. School resource officers would be assigned full-time to help play a role in protecting our students from not only violence, but also drugs and alcohol, bullying and other issues that may arise.

Unfortunately, instances of threats and danger continue to plague schools across our country, and Central and Northern New York has not been immune. Since school safety is a complex problem we all must work together to find ways to combat this issue in a proactive way. As we prepare to begin the 2019 Legislative Session, I am looking forward to taking additional steps toward making our schools safer.