



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Chris Jacobs

## Jacobs calls Department of Education Regulations an "Assault" on the Independence of Private and Religious Schools

SENATOR JACOBS August 27, 2019

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(Buffalo, NY) — State Senator Chris Jacobs (R,C,I) called on the New York State Department of Education (SED) to rescind its proposed rule that would give public school districts oversight responsibilities on the quality of instruction at private and religious schools in their district.

“We have excellent non-public schools in Western New York and imposing these far-reaching oversight requirements is not only unnecessary, but harmful to their independence,” said Jacobs. “Besides violating the long-held separation and respect between public and private schools, subordinating private schools to the wishes and whims of the state and local school districts compromises the educational choice of students and families who believe they would be better served by an independent school curriculum,” the Senator added.

Jacobs also said there are currently provisions for oversight and intervention if a private school has shown itself not to be providing a sound education for children. He argued that imposing duplicate layers of oversight on private and religious schools - most of them with stellar academic records - is governmental overreach. He also pointed out that this requirement will drain precious resources from both the private schools and the public school districts required to conduct the oversight.

“This is a prime example of an unfunded state mandate, and a waste of resources that both our public and private schools could put to better use elsewhere,” said Jacobs.

In announcing his opposition, leaders of independent educational institutions from the 60th Senate District who were also opposed to the SED’s new rules joined Jacobs in calling for them to be rescinded.

"The Park School was founded in 1912 to be intentionally different than the traditional, larger-scale educational model, and our practices and philosophy are more individually student-focused than what large public districts are able to offer," said Jeremy Besch, Head of School at the Park School. "As a result, our outcomes routinely exceed the standards set by the public districts, and thereby suggest that our current accreditation process through New York State Association of Independent Schools is more than adequate in ensuring that our students receive a quality education that meets and surpasses state standards."

“Since 1857, Nardin Academy’s tradition of academic excellence has been insured by the oversight of an independent Board of Trustees and a vigilant accreditation process,” said Nardin President Marsha Sullivan. “Additional oversight as proposed by the State of New York would deny Nardin Academy its ability to offer the independent curriculum that has defined our school for generations while providing our students with such a strong academic foundation. Generating additional costs, introducing state oversight of our internal operations and jeopardizing proprietary information shared between the school and our families adds no value to Nardin Academy or its students.”

“St. Joseph’s Collegiate Institute, alongside our Catholic partner schools, is proud of our long tradition of providing a high-quality, innovative education to generations of students from throughout Western New York,” said President Christopher Fulco. “This regulation is unnecessary as we are already regularly reviewed and accredited through both national and regional agencies and have consistently proven to exceed the standards set by these organizations in all aspects of school life.”

"Christian Central Academy upholds high standards of academic excellence and Business First’s rankings of our K-12 school demonstrate that our students' academic performance exceeds that of the large majority of the public school districts in our region,” said Interim Head of School Dr. Stuart Chen. “Our re-accreditation by Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools provides the oversight needed for certifying our academic rigor and ensuring continuous improvement. To impose further bureaucratic burdens on our neighboring public school districts would be totally unnecessary, superfluous and wasteful."

A longtime education advocate, Jacobs is the co-founder of the BISON Scholarship Fund that over the last twenty-five years has provided more than 20,000 scholarships to help Western New York children attend the private school of their choice. The Senator is encouraging all public and private stakeholders who would be negatively impacted by the

proposed rules to register their opposition with the SED before the public comment period closes on September 2<sup>nd</sup>.

“We have had success in preventing bad policy from being enacted when our arguments had merit and our voices were strong, and I think that is the situation we find ourselves in here,” said Jacobs. “I would encourage the leadership of our independent schools and as many of their alumni as possible to speak out in opposition to the proposed changes, and our public school districts need to let the SED know how burdensome these rules would be for them,” he concluded.

Anyone wishing to express their opposition to the proposed rules can send their comments to [seregcomments@nysed.gov](mailto:seregcomments@nysed.gov).