



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

## Senator Lanza Announces that Staten Island student is 1 of 20 from New York nominated for consideration of the 2022 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program

ANDREW J. LANZA December 16, 2021



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*"I am excited to learn that Justin Shnayder of Staten Island Technical High School has been nominated as a candidate for the 2022 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. He joins a select group of just 20 students in New York State being considered for this prestigious honor. Justin earned my recommendation through determination, leadership, hard work, and academic*


*success. I am confident that Justin will continue to bring great pride to our Staten Island community. I commend NYSED Commissioner Rosa for selecting a dynamic group of students from throughout New York State to advance to the next round of review with the Commission on Presidential Scholars. As both a Staten Islander and Senator, I am proud to continue to support Justin and his candidacy." -- Senator Andrew J. Lanza*

State Education Commissioner Betty A. Rosa today nominated 25 outstanding New York State high school seniors for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. The Presidential Scholar recognition is one of the nation's highest honors for high school students.

"New York's nominees are an impressive group of students who demonstrate academic excellence and distinguished leadership in their endeavors both in and out of school," Board of Regents Chancellor Lester W. Young, Jr. said. "Their nominations are a testament to what can be accomplished with diligence to school work and the dedication of fine teachers and mentors."

"I am so proud of these hard-working, talented New York students and I am honored to nominate them for this prestigious program," Commissioner Rosa said. "They are truly among the best and brightest, and I join our legislators in congratulating all of them on this honor."

New York's legislators nominate students from their districts and the Commissioner, as Chief State School Officer, chooses 20 nominees to advance to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) for the general component and five from Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars selects honored scholars annually based on their academic success, artistic excellence, essays, school evaluations, and transcripts, as well as evidence of community service, leadership, and demonstrated 

commitment to high ideals. Application is by invitation only.

USDE will issue invitations in late January from among those students nominated by Chief State School Officers and from a pool based on scores on the SAT or ACT. Semifinalists will be notified in mid-April and Scholars will be notified in May. Students chosen as U.S. Presidential Scholars receive a medallion.

For more information on the Presidential Scholars Program, visit the [U.S. Department of Education's website](#).

Below are comments from the legislators who recommended the 25 students.

### **General Component Nominees for the 2022 Presidential Scholars Program**

- Britney Bennett, Elmont Memorial High School, Sewanhaka Central High School District
- Leland Blevins, Parishville-Hopkinton High School, Parishville-Hopkinton Central School District
- Brandon Campagna, Eleanor Roosevelt High School, NYC Geographic District #2
- Lucia Cardona, Fairport High School, Fairport Central School District
- Stephanie Espinoza-Perez, Cardinal Spellman High School
- Xavier Foster, Baldwin High School, Baldwin Union Free School District
- Britney Gramajo Barrios, White Plains High School, White Plains City School District
- Jaden Halevi, Saunders Trades and Technical High School, Yonkers Public Schools
- Samantha Hart, Northern Adirondack High School, Northern Adirondack Central School District
- George Henry, The Clinton School, NYC Geographic District #2
- Alana Iacovissi, Rome Free Academy, Rome City School District

- Rayna Isber, Fort Hamilton High School, NYC Geographic District #20
- Nishaant Jacobus, Amherst Central High School, Amherst Central School District
- Caroline Johansen, Saugerties High School, Saugerties Central School District
- Kaylee Lacey, Medina Jr.-Sr. High School, Medina Central School District
- Joshua Li, Fort Hamilton High School, NYC Geographic District #20
- Joseph Mathew, Hauppauge High School, Hauppauge Public School District
- Zoe Meister, The Beacon School, NYC Geographic District #2
- Justin Shnayder, Staten Island Technical High School, NYC Geographic District #31
- Michael Wong, Guilderland High School, Guilderland Central School District

#### **Career and Technical Education Nominees for the 2022 Presidential Scholars Program**

- Alexandra Clougher, William Floyd High School, William Floyd School District
- Ethan Hettler, Charles W. Baker High School, Baldwinsville Central School District
- Daniel Leon, Riverside High School, Yonkers Public Schools
- Lindsey Lukasiewicz, Cleveland Hills High School, Cleveland Hill Union Free School District
- Ahona Rana, The Bronx High School of Science, NYC Geographic District #10

#### **Quotes by New York State Legislators on the Presidential Scholars Nominees:**

**Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins:** "I'm thrilled that Daniel Leon of Riverside High School in Yonkers was nominated for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program by Commissioner Rosa. Daniel is an exceptional student who has overcome barriers and stands

out as a leader among his peers. Mastering class materials and tests at school, Daniel has already earned 13 college credits at Westchester Community College. Outside of school, he guides others in how to study and learn. Coming from a working-class immigrant family, Daniel is determined to show members of his community and extended family — many who have not finished high school — the importance of education. I was proud to recommend him for this prestigious honor.”

**Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick:** “I am deeply proud that Commissioner Rosa has nominated one of our most respected young local scholars, George Henry of The Clinton School, for the prestigious Presidential Scholars Program. George has not only excelled academically, he is known to be a creative, analytical problem solver with a wide range of interests and accomplishments. He is an engaged leader of a Students of Color Matter Club and his school's Student Leadership Team, where he demonstrates his commitment to social justice issues and the betterment of his school community. I congratulate George and his family on this esteemed nomination and wish him the best as he continues in the application process.”

**Senator Shelley B. Mayer:** “Congratulations to Jaden Halevi, a senior at Saunders Trades and Technical High School in Yonkers, on being nominated by Commissioner Betty A. Rosa for the prestigious Presidential Scholars Program. Jaden is a gifted computer science student who has volunteered his talents to assist senior citizens with their electronic devices and worked to promote black-owned businesses. I am certain his academic success and community work is just the start of the many amazing things he will accomplish in his lifetime. I commend all of this year's nominees for their achievements, and I thank the community members, teachers, administrators, and families who supported them along the

way.”

**Assembly Minority Leader Will Barclay:** “Ethan Hettler, of Charles W. Baker High School, represents the best of what it means to be a candidate for the 2022 U.S. Presidential Scholars Excellence in Career and Technical Education Program. Ethan is a phenomenal student who has thrived in a wide variety of science and technology courses, but it is his steadfast dedication to his community that is most impressive. From his work as an Eagle Scout to his drive and ambition in the classroom, I have no doubt Ethan has a very bright future ahead. I am thrilled to give him my full endorsement for the prestigious position.”

**Senate Minority Leader Rob Ortt:** “Congratulations to Kaylee Lacey from Medina High School upon her nomination to the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. This is an incredibly high honor, and I was happy to recommend her to the State Education Department. Being one of the twenty students chosen by Commissioner Betty Rosa is a testament to Kaylee’s hard work and dedication, which I have no doubt will lead her to accomplish whatever she sets her mind to in the future. Keep up the great work, Kaylee!”

**Senator Jamaal T. Bailey:** “I am thrilled to congratulate Ahona Rana of Bronx Science and Stephanie Espinoza-Perez of Cardinal Spellman High School on the prestigious honor of being selected as two of the 25 nominees from New York State for the 2022 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. It is a remarkable achievement and a testament to their hard work, dedication to uplifting their community, and demonstrated leadership inside and outside the classroom. Ahona and Stephanie embody the incredible talent and academic excellence of

the 36th district, and I know they will bring that same drive and commitment to all of their future endeavors and continue to make our district and the entire state proud as they scale new heights. I also want to thank Commissioner Rosa and our local school community for all of the work they've done to support and champion our future leaders. Congratulations on this well-deserved honor!"

**Assemblymember Marianne Buttenschon:** "I am very pleased Commissioner Rosa has selected one of my community's excellent local high school students as a candidate for recognition in the 2022 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. Rome Free Academy senior, Alana Iacovissi brilliantly exemplifies the exceptional qualities recognized by this highest distinction. Alana is known for her intelligent, well-rounded, and committed approach to academics, sports, student government, communications, and community involvement. We are very fortunate and grateful for people like Alana who inspire so many in and across our community."

**Assemblymember Harvey Epstein:** "Historically, our community has blended art and activism to effect change. Zoe carries on this practice through her work creating wearable art in the form of buttons to raise awareness and funding for programs to tackle climate change. Her nomination for the Presidential Scholars Program is well-deserved and we are proud to support her."

**Assemblymember Patricia Fahy:** "I am deeply proud that Commissioner Rosa has nominated one of our most distinguished young leaders and scholars, Michael Wong of Guilderland High School, for the highly-esteemed U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. Michael joins a

prestigious group of students nominated for the U.S. Presidential Scholars program each year and has made his community, the 109th District, and New York State proud. Michael is involved in almost every area of his school community, and I'm delighted that he will be rightly recognized for his outstanding and exemplary academic and extracurricular achievements."

**Assemblymember Michael J. Fitzpatrick:** "We're proud and honored that Joseph Mathew has been nominated by NYS Commissioner Betty A. Rosa for recognition of the 2022 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. Joseph is a talented young man, very strong, an excellent student and possesses a strong work ethic. I wish him well and we anticipate great things from him in the future."

**Senator Andrew Gounardes:** "Congratulations to Joshua Li and Rayna Isber, two students from Fort Hamilton High School, for the honor of being nominated for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. Both Joshua and Rayna are exceptional students who exemplify leadership and academic achievement. Their inclusion in this program is both a result of their hard work and determination, but also that of their family, friends, teacher, and administrators who all played their part and should be commended as well. I look forward to tracking their successes moving forward!"

**Senator Michelle Hinchey:** "It was my pleasure to nominate Saugerties High School student Caroline Johansen for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, which recognizes America's best and brightest high school seniors — a prestigious recognition that Caroline undoubtedly deserves. Caroline excels academically, pursuing a rigorous course load while



also exploring the field of neuroscience through her internships and supplementary coursework. A brilliant and trusted role model to her classmates, Caroline also shines outside of the classroom as the Student Advocate on the Saugerties Board of Education, a lead dancer with the Ulster County Ballet Company, a committed member of the Saugerties High School Band, and a peer tutor for algebra. I want to extend my deepest congratulations to Caroline on her selection as one of New York's 20 nominees this year and thank Commissioner Rosa for recognizing this outstanding young woman!"

**Assemblymember Billy Jones:** "During these challenging times, it's more important than ever to recognize the extraordinary North Country students who have gone above and beyond both inside and outside of the classroom. I can think of no better student to be nominated for the 2022 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program than Samantha Hart, who has made her mark on our community and taken every opportunity to learn and help others. I want to congratulate Samantha and wish her the best of luck on her future endeavors."

**Senator Todd Kaminsky:** "I could not have been prouder to nominate Baldwin High School's Xavier Foster. He is a leader in and out of the classroom and sets a strong example for his peers. His wealth of accomplishments are proof that hard work and dedication to one's community can make a difference at any age."

**Assemblymember Jen Lunsford:** "I am thrilled that Commissioner Betty A. Rosa has nominated Lucia Cardona, a spectacular young scholar from Fairport High School, for the prestigious Presidential Scholars Program. Lucia now has the opportunity to compete for this national award with other distinguished young scholars from around the country and to

represent the very best of New York. Lucia is not only a fixture of the High Honor Roll, a talented varsity athlete and musician, but also a dedicated volunteer who donates her time and energy to lift up her community. Lucia truly embodies the passion, values and work ethic of a future leader and I cannot wait to see what she does next!"

**Assemblymember Karen McMahon:** "I was thrilled to learn that Nishaant Jacobus from Amherst Central High School has been nominated for the 2022 Presidential Scholars Program. Nishaant is a truly impressive individual with superb academic credentials and a particular interest and aptitude in the fields of math and science. Moreover, he has shown himself to be a leader and role model in both his school and community. I am proud to have recommended Nishaant for the Presidential Scholars Program, extend my sincere congratulations to him and his family, and wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors."

**Assemblymember Amy Paulin:** "I am so pleased to learn that Britney Gramajo Barrios of White Plains High School has been nominated as one of only twenty students from all of New York State as a candidate for recognition in the 2022 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. The Presidential Scholars Program recognizes and honors outstanding high school seniors, and Ms. Barrios is surely that! She has demonstrated immense dedication and focus, is at the top of her class and has availed herself of the most rigorous academic program offerings at White Plains High School. Her success is a testament to her intelligence, persistence, and dedication to her academics. I congratulate Britney and her family on this esteemed nomination and wish her the best in her academic and future careers."

**Assemblymember Rebecca A. Seawright:** “I am proud to have nominated Presidential Scholar candidate Brandon Campagna, a senior at Eleanor Roosevelt High School. He is a standout for his dedication to his academics, leadership in volunteerism, and resilience in the face of personal challenges. He has excelled academically in Advanced Placement courses and even assists the AP Computer Science and Technology Director. Brandon Campagna is exceptional and worthy of this important distinction.”

**Assemblymember Michaelle C. Solages:** "I am pleased to learn that Britney Bennett of our very own Elmont Memorial High School has been nominated by Commissioner Dr. Betty Rosa as a candidate for the 2022 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. Britney is an incredible leader inside the classroom and outside in her community. She is highly regarded as a passionate member of the Key Club, an outstanding Model UN delegate, and a mentor to the young students she tutors. Our district is thrilled to have such a powerful young woman representing us and we look forward to the bright future that she is heading towards."

**Senator Dan Stec:** “Leland Blevins is a high achiever, a class leader, athlete and all-around great young person who has distinguished himself in countless ways throughout his academic career. He is very deserving of this nomination and the chance to be considered for the 2022 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program next year. I was honored to recommend him and the fact that Leland has already attended some weekend classes at my alma mater, Clarkson University, makes me even happier to support his bid. I join his family, friends and faculty in wishing him well!”

**Assemblymember Fred W. Thiele, Jr.:** “I am thrilled that one of my local students, Alexandra Clougher, has been nominated as one of five Career and Technical Education (CTE) students for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program! Ms. Clougher is a William Floyd High School senior who stands out as having academic success, leadership qualities, and personal achievements, even in the face of adversity. I am proud to represent this determined young woman in the First Assembly District and wish Alexandra luck as she moves to the next level of this notable competition.”

**Assemblymember Monica P. Wallace:** “Lindsey Lukasiewicz has shown herself to be an outstanding, well-rounded, and dedicated student. Her mentorship of freshman students and participation in the Animal Science Program at BOCES show her compassion and her devotion to helping others in her community. Meanwhile, her strong academic standing and participation in extracurricular activities reveal her commitment to excel in everything she does. Lindsey exemplifies what the Presidential Scholars Program stands for and has earned this great honor.”

**Senator Alexis Weik:** “Alexandra Clougher is an incredible student who, when faced with adversity, has met it head on and continued to excel inside and outside the classroom. I am proud to have nominated her for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Excellence in Career and Technical Education Program and her selection as one of only five students in the State nominated by Commissioner Rosa is a testament to her dedication and work in the CTE field. I wish Alexandra success as she advances in the national selection process and I know she will succeed in all of her future endeavors.”