



2019 Annual Report

**New York State Standing Committee
on New York City Education**

Senator John C. Liu
Chairperson



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CHAIRPERSON
NYC EDUCATION COMMITTEE

COMMITTEES
EDUCATION
FINANCE
BUDGET AND REVENUE
TRANSPORTATION
RULES
ALCOHOLISM AND
SUBSTANCE ABUSE

December 31, 2019

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senate Majority Leader
NYS Capitol Building, Room 330
Albany, NY 12247

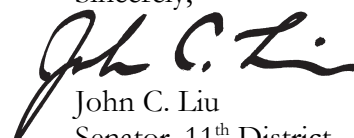
Dear Senator Stewart-Cousins:

Enclosed please find the 2019 committee report, summarizing the accomplishments and activities of the New York City Education Committee. It was my pleasure and honor to serve as Chair of this committee.

This year, we focused on reenergizing this previously dormant committee. To that end, we prioritized listening to and engaging with stakeholders in the NYC education system. In March, the committee held a hearing on mayoral accountability, and thanks to input from the hearing testimony, enacted significant reforms to increase transparency and parental involvement within a three-year extension of mayoral accountability. Additionally, throughout the spring of 2019, the committee traveled to all five boroughs to hear community input on specialized high schools and school diversity. This citywide process ensured that no one was excluded from conversations about our schools.

As we move forward to the 2020 legislative session, the committee will continue its work to ensure that all New York City schools provide all students a quality education. A top priority remains securing the woefully overdue \$1.1 billion in foundation aid funding NYC schools are owed under court order.

Many thanks to the Senate Democratic Majority for their support of the important work that was done this year, to the members of the committee for their ongoing commitment to education, and to you for your thoughtful leadership.

Sincerely,

John C. Liu
Senator, 11th District

2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT
NEW YORK STATE SENATE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON NEW YORK CITY EDUCATION

Senator John C. Liu, Chair

Committee Members

Majority

Senator Jamaal T. Bailey
Senator Andrew Gounardes
Senator Robert Jackson
Senator Velmanette Montgomery

Minority

Senator Andrew J. Lanza,
Ranking Minority Member
Senator Betty Little

COMMITTEE JURISDICTION AND OVERVIEW

In 2019, the New York City Education Committee focused on engaging with and listening to stakeholders in the city education system. In March, the committee held a hearing on mayoral accountability, and thanks to input from the hearing testimony, enacted significant reforms to increase transparency and parental involvement within a three-year extension of mayoral accountability. Additionally, throughout the spring of 2019, the committee traveled to all five boroughs to hear community input on specialized high schools and school diversity.

1. Hearings on Mayoral Accountability

Mayoral accountability of New York City schools (also known as “mayoral control”) was scheduled to expire on June 30, 2019. The Executive budget included a three-year extender, and the Senate accepted the three-year extender in its one-house budget, pending a hearing to contemplate and recommend reforms to enhance transparency and parental/community input in New York City school governance.

On March 15, 2019, the New York City Education Committee held a hearing on mayoral accountability in Manhattan. The Committee heard over five hours of testimony from a number of stakeholders, including Mayor Bill de Blasio, Chancellor Richard Carranza, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, Chair of the New York City Council Education Committee Mark Treyger, former Chancellor Dennis Walcott, school administrators, education and child advocates, Community Education Council members, community based organizations, and faith leaders. Many of the people who testified sought greater transparency on education decisions, and expressed a desire to increase parental involvement in education decision-making.

Thanks in part to the testimony elicited at this hearing, the Legislature and the Governor enacted significant reforms to increase transparency and parental involvement within a three-year extension of mayoral accountability within the state budget. The reforms added two members to Panel for Education Policy, with one member elected by parent leaders; required the mayor to abide by a 10-day waiting period and provide a written explanation for removal of any member from the Panel for Education Policy; provided that Community Education Councils would be elected directly by parents and not only parent associations; allowed Community Education Councils to have feedback on the hiring of Community Superintendents, significant changes in school utilization, and school closings; required the Panel for Education Policy to provide written explanation on changes to school utilization and school closings that differed from the recommendation of a Community Education Council; and mandated that the chancellor have teaching experience.

The New York City Education Committee plans to conduct ongoing review of mayoral accountability in 2020 as the new measures for transparency and parental involvement are implemented under law.

2. Community Forums on Specialized High Schools Admissions

The New York City public school system has nine Specialized High Schools: the Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Latin School, Brooklyn Technical High School, Fiorello H. LaGuardia

High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, High School for Mathematics, Science and Engineering at City College, High School of American Studies at Lehman College, Queens High School for the Sciences at York College, Staten Island Technical High School and Stuyvesant High School. According to the New York City Department of Education, “the nine specialized high schools are one way that New York City supports the educational needs of students who excel academically and/or artistically.” The sole basis of admission to 8 of the 9 Specialized High Schools is the Specialized High School Admissions Test (“SHSAT”) (the exception is LaGuardia, which requires an audition and evidence of satisfactory achievement).

Over the years, admission of black and Latinx students to Specialized High Schools declined dramatically. Currently, about 10% of the specialized high schools are comprised of black and Latinx students. In response, Mayor de Blasio proposed changing state law to phase out admissions based on the SHSAT. The proposal generated immediate backlash, particularly from Asian American community, because they had been excluded from conversations about changes to the admissions process.

The New York City Education Committee responded to the need to an open dialogue and consensus building on specialized high school admissions and school diversity by holding six citywide forums between April and June 2019. These forums were an open call for suggestions and ideas on reform, if needed, on the specialized high school admissions process and school diversity. Hundreds of parents, teachers, education advocates and former and current high school students spoke at the forums. “It is our goal to hear every single voice on this issue,” said Senator Liu. “The voices are varied. They range a wide gamut of different opinions and positions, as well as solutions and suggestions. We want to hear all of that.”

Without a doubt, community opinions on specialized high school admissions are wide ranging, deeply felt and emotionally charged. Consequently, the current conversation around reform has been, at times, tense and uncomfortable. Despite these challenges, the Committee on New York City Education believes it worthwhile and necessary to take steps to mend this rift and thoughtfully consider all voices before advancing a legislative solution, if any. In that spirit, the Committee held the following forums in Spring 2019:

The Committee believes that listening and engaging is an essential first step in the legislative process, and extends their thanks to the many parents, teachers, students, alumni, advocates and community members who shared their thoughts and concerns at these forums. The work of the legislature, on specialized high schools as well as many other New York City education issues, must proceed with diligence, integrity, and equity to ensure that all of New York City’s schoolchildren have access to a quality education.

TWO HOUSE BILLS

| Bill | Sponsor | Summary | Action |
|-------------|----------------|--|---|
| S725 | Montgomery | Requires that all special education students attending schools scheduled to be closed or to undergo a significant change be assigned to new schools prior to the implementation of the closing or change. | Last Action: 10/23/19 referred to education |
| S2478 | Sanders | Requires community district education councils to establish safety hazard advisory review committees to review conditions along routes in its district by which students travel or walk to and from school. | Last Action: 11/25/19 referred to education |
| S2838B | Gounardes | Requires public schools in any city with a population over one million that have at least 25% of students practicing a religious faith with specific dietary restrictions to offer food options which meet such dietary restrictions. | Last Action: 05/09/19 amend (t) and recommit to education 05/09/19 print number 6335a |
| S5042 | Parker | Relates to creating a city-wide council for district seventy-five to advise and comment on educational or instructional policies involving district seventy-five services. | |
| S5877 | Liu | Relates to requirements associated with the New York city community school district system; permits city-wide council presidents to vote for a member of the city board; and allows parents whose children who at any time in the past enrolled in a bilingual or English as a second language program to serve on the city-wide council on English language learners. | Last Action: 06/11/19 referred to education |
| S6068 | Parker | Requires the chancellor of the NYC department of education to establish a pilot program for the purpose of providing frozen take-home meals to certain children located in the city of New York; and requires the chancellor of the | |

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| | | NYC department of education to select one NYC public school from each borough to participate in such pilot program. | |
| S6208 | Jackson | Requires contracts for the transportation of school children in a city of at least one million inhabitants to contain provisions for the retention or preference in hiring of school bus workers. | Last Action: 06/06/19 substituted by s6208 12/26/19 VETOED MEMO.285 |



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STANDING COMMITTEE

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