



NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

For Immediate Release: February 13, 2020

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Senate Majority Takes Major Steps To Improve Education And Diversity Training

(Albany, NY) The Senate Majority today passed a series of bills to improve education and diversity training across New York State. The Senate Majority is committed to improving New York State’s education system by focusing efforts on increasing diversity throughout our school systems. The legislation passed by the Senate Majority takes into consideration the complexity of the education system by creating a task force, developing partnerships, establishing a temporary commission, and creating a community that will bring together underrepresented educators annually.

“As a former educator, I know first-hand the formative roles teachers and administrators play in the lives of our students. When young people of color see themselves within the education system, they feel more represented and inspired to enter the education field,” **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. “This legislative package will promote educator diversity and training throughout New York State and help ensure our schools better represent the communities they serve. I thank the bill sponsors for their leadership on this important issue.”

The legislation passed by the Senate Democratic Majority includes:

- **Educator Diversity Taskforce:** This bill, [S.5808A](#), sponsored by Senator Velmanette Montgomery, establishes a task force on educator diversity in New York State to study the presence of educator diversity.
- **Grow Your Own Initiatives:** This bill, [S.7635](#), sponsored by Senator John Liu, encourages school districts, BOCES, and institutions of higher education to develop partnerships to attract underrepresented candidates into the teaching profession.
- **Commission on Educational Opportunity Program:** This bill, [S.6788A](#), sponsored by Senator Jamaal Bailey, creates a temporary state commission to study the ten SUNY Community colleges not currently participating in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and make recommendations for legislative action based upon its findings.
- **Statewide and Regional Conventions:** This bill, [S.7642](#), sponsored by Senator Robert Jackson, directs the Education Commissioner to convene statewide and regional conventions to bring together underrepresented educators annually to discuss experiences, best practices, and afford for networking, mentorship opportunities, and support.
- **Establishing The Amistad Commission:** This bill, [S.6445](#), sponsored by Senator Robert Jackson, will move the Amistad commission from the Department of State to the New York State Education Department.

Bill Sponsor Senator Jamaal Bailey, said, “Due to the increased cost for a higher education, it has become more difficult for students around the state to afford to attend college or seek out educational advancement after

high school. Students around the state have had to come up with unique ways to afford to attend college, one of which being pursuing a two-year degree at a community college, then transferring to a four-year college or university. Though this approach is widely used, for those students in need of financial support, this alternative sometimes presents as a risk instead of a benefit. Many four-year institutions do not allow incoming transfer students to participate in their EOP/HEOP programs if the two-year institution they attended had not offered one. To alleviate the financial stress on these students, I have introduced [S6788A](#) with Assemblywoman Joyner that creates a commission to evaluate the need for educational opportunity program in the 10 of the 30 remaining SUNY community colleges that do not offer the program.”

Bill Sponsor Senator Robert Jackson, said, “The two bills I sponsored today are both fitting for Black History Month. The first concerns the Amistad Commission, formed by the New York State legislature in 2005 to review state curriculum regarding chattel slavery. All people should know of and remember the dehumanizing atrocities committed during the period of the African slave trade and slavery in the Americas and consider the legacy of that violent system of exploitation in this country. As we approach the 500-year anniversary of the 1521 Monte Alegre rebellion in Santo Domingo, the first historically recorded rebellion of black people in the Americas; it makes sense to reevaluate the work of the Amistad Commission. To better connect their work to the educational curricula in New York State, this bill moves the Commission from the Department of State to the Department of Education (NYSED). With the passage of this bill, we can continue the work of educating our young people about the history of chattel slavery and the legacy of white supremacy in this country. The second bill directs NYSED to hold annual statewide and five regional conventions for underrepresented teachers. Being a teacher from an underrepresented racial or ethnic group can be very isolating and make it hard to do your job well. Only about 15 or 20% of teachers in New York State are people of color, with over 200 school districts not employing a single non-white teacher. This disparity puts a burden on those teachers not only to support students of color who look to them as leaders and role models, but it also can leave them feeling unsupported among colleagues. By directing NYSED to hold an annual convention for underrepresented teachers, we are directing resources to improving the support networks for these teachers so they can provide an even better education to the diverse children of New York State.”

Bill Sponsor Senator John Liu, said, “There is a stark lack of diversity among the ranks of New York’s teachers. This bill will help school districts develop “Grow Your Own” initiatives to expand the number of teachers with diverse backgrounds by looking to current students as well as paraprofessionals and community members. Not only will “Grow Your Own” programs help address teacher shortages, but it will also remove barriers for people of color who actually want to teach. Diverse, culturally responsive, community-based educators of color will advance achievement for all students.”

Bill Sponsor Senator Velmanette Montgomery, said, “Currently, our education system does not reflect the diversity of our state. Educator diversity is paramount to ensuring that our students are learning a diverse and inclusive curriculum and from varying perspectives. The student and educator relationship is often critical to a student’s success, and the possibility of that relationship developing is increased when students have instructors who come from similar backgrounds and life experiences. With the Educator Diversity Taskforce, we will examine the current state of New York’s educator diversity in hopes of building a more diverse and equitable educator workforce.”

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