



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 374

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to amend the State Education Law to require that the New York City Department of Education equip all schools with adequate heating and air conditioning means to ensure an indoor temperature of 68 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter and 73 to 79 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer while school or summer school is in operation in the building.

By Council Members Chin, Barron, Eugene, Gibson, Johnson, Mendez, Richards, Koslowitz and Rodriguez

Whereas, A substantial body of research over many decades demonstrates that human comfort and productivity is affected by indoor air quality, and more specifically, by air temperature; and

Whereas, Further, research shows that there is a range of temperatures at which people are most productive and that this range can vary slightly based on the season; and

Whereas, According to the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), the optimal temperature range for office productivity is roughly between 72°F and 77°F; and

Whereas, Studies on school classrooms show similar links between comfort and student learning, although perhaps at temperatures somewhat lower than those that are optimal for office workers; and

Whereas, In one award-winning research project, students from Westview High School in Portland, Oregon were randomly assigned to rooms at 61°F, 72°F, and 81°F and then given a short test. Students in the 72°F room scored 14% better than students in the cold room and 18% better than students in the warm room; and

Whereas, Additional research has shown that classroom conditions are improved by air conditioning, with the result that teachers' attitudes and work patterns are significantly improved due to less fatigue; and

Whereas, Likewise, student performance, attitude and behavior improves in proper air conditioned climates, making it easier to concentrate and making them feel less drowsy and fatigued; and

Whereas, It is, therefore, not surprising that a 2002 UCLA School Facility Report concluded the building condition with the most influence on student learning was air conditioning; and

Whereas, According to ASHRAE, the optimal temperature range for student productivity in the summer is between 73°F and 79°F, most likely on account of the outside environment and personal preferences; and

Whereas, One of the most frequent funding requests made to Council Members by school administrators is for air conditioning equipment or improvements, as the lack of indoor temperature control is cited as a hindrance to student instruction; and

Whereas, Although New York City Council members distribute “Resolution A” funding each year to schools for capital improvement or enhancement projects, only centralized air conditioning, and not individual units, are eligible to be covered by these grants; and

Whereas, Individual air conditioning units are considered expense budget items and are thus financial responsibility of the schools themselves; and

Whereas, However, the cost of installing or replacing air conditioning is usually prohibitive for schools; and

Whereas, Many of the City’s public schools, including those that provide summer school instruction, lack central air conditioning or adequate individual air conditioning units; and

Whereas, According to a survey of public elementary, middle and high schools in Manhattan’s School District 1 and School District 2 conducted by the office of Council Member Margaret Chin, a majority of schools lack adequate temperature control; and

Whereas, Of the 26 schools that responded to the survey, 19% reported that their school did not have adequate heating and 50% of schools reported that they did not have adequate air conditioning; and

Whereas, Further, the majority of schools surveyed (69%) rely exclusively on individual air conditioning units; and

Whereas, The standards set by New York State regarding air quality pertain to ventilation, clean air

supply, and proper heating but not explicitly to air conditioning; and

Whereas, New York City regulations also contain heating requirements, with minimum indoor temperatures to be maintained, but no air conditioning requirements or maximum indoor temperatures permitted; and

Whereas, Given the evidence that the thermal environment seriously impacts student and teacher productivity, requiring that school buildings have adequate climate control would be a step towards ensuring that New York City students are learning and performing at their highest capacity; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Legislature to amend the State Education Law to require that the New York City Department of Education equip all schools with adequate heating and air conditioning means to ensure an indoor temperature of 68 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter and 73 to 79 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer while school or summer school is in operation in the building.

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