



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1800

Resolution urging the New York State Board of Regents and State Education Department to require certified school library media specialists (“school librarians”) in public elementary schools and to enforce library staffing regulations in all public schools, including the New York City public school system.

By Council Members Gentile, Van Bramer, Barron, Brewer, Chin, Ferreras, James, Koo, Koppell, Lander, Mendez, Palma, Recchia and Richards

Whereas, According to the Regulations of the New York State Commissioner of Education, each elementary and secondary school (middle schools and high schools) is required to have a school library; and

Whereas, Currently, New York State regulations require certified school library media specialists (“school librarians”) in middle and high schools but not elementary schools; and

Whereas, In the New York City public school system, with approximately 1.1 million students and 1,700 schools, there are only 306 certified librarians on staff systemwide with 178 in high schools, 95 in middle schools, and 33 in elementary schools, according to the latest data by the City’s Department of Education (“DOE”); and

Whereas, This number represents a decline of more than 16% since 2011, when the City employed 365 licensed librarians; and

Whereas, According to DOE’s testimony at a New York City Council hearing held jointly with the Committee on Education, the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations and the Select Committee on Libraries in May 2013, “[m]any campus schools are maximizing resources by sharing library services and the costs of a librarian [while] others are assigning teachers to the library [and] using parent volunteers”; and

Whereas, In 2012, the New York State Board of Regents Advisory Council on Libraries (“RAC”) issued a report which included a number of recommendations for school libraries, including the recommendation to “expand the existing Commissioner’s Regulations (“CR 91.2”) to require an elementary school librarian in every school...and enforce library staffing regulations in all public schools”; and

Whereas, According to testimony by a RAC representative at the New York City Council hearing, the state regulation calling for a school librarian at the secondary level has been in existence since 1973, but has not been enforced in 40 years; and

Whereas, Extensive research shows that schools that utilize school libraries have seen increased motivation, higher assessment scores and higher graduation rates among students; and

Whereas, School librarians are essential because they teach students information literacy, technological skills, and collaborate with teachers in designing curricula, developing learning experiences, and providing technical support; and

Whereas, The role of the school librarian continues to evolve to accommodate the learning needs of students in the 21st century and, furthermore, the school librarian is increasingly seen as a guide to help students become life-long learners; and

Whereas, The school librarian has become a leader in teaching information and technology skills, including ethics and responsibility in the use of social media; and

Whereas, Advocates maintain that school libraries and librarians are essential to closing the digital divide for low income students and others who lack access to computers, tablets and other technology at home; and

Whereas, It is absolutely necessary for every school to have a school librarian to create a supportive working and learning environment for teachers and students, respectively, and to ensure academic achievement; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges the New York State Board of Regents and

State Education Department to require certified school library media specialists (“school librarians”) in public elementary schools and to enforce library staffing regulations in all public schools, including the New York City public school system.

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