



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 66

Resolution urging the State Legislature to reject demands to dismantle or abolish Community School Boards in the City of New York.

By Council Members Koppell, Barron, Recchia, Vann, Jackson, DeBlasio, Liu, Seabrook, Comrie, Reed, Rivera, Sanders Jr. and Weprin; also Council Member Clarke

WHEREAS, The State Legislature is currently considering changes in the structure and governance of the school system in the city of New York; and

WHEREAS, There have been numerous proposals for restructuring of the Central Board of Education as well as some proposals of the restructuring of Community School Boards; and

WHEREAS, Some elected officials and other advocates have recommended abolition of the Central Board of Education as well as dismantling of Community School Boards; and

WHEREAS, Changes in the composition and powers of the Central Board of Education does not require any change in the composition or selection of Community School Boards; and

WHEREAS, Elected Community School Boards were established in New York City as part of the School Decentralization Law enacted in 1969; and

WHEREAS, The School Decentralization Law was enacted after a long struggle to decentralize the control of schools from an unresponsive and remote centralized bureaucracy; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of elected Community School Boards is give parents and other citizens the right to have a voice in the establishment of educational policy for their children's schools and to provide for oversight over the administration of the schools by parents and the public; and

WHEREAS, The local school boards meet on a regular basis in each of the City's school districts and give parents and other citizens the ability to express opinions, concerns, complaints and set forth proposals with respect to the schools in their neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, The powers of Community School Boards have been severely restricted as a result of amendments to the Education Law since the establishment of such school boards particularly by legislation enacted in 1996 which removed much of the power local school boards to select supervisors and other personnel; and

WHEREAS, As a result of the enactment of such legislation, school boards are largely restricted to the establishment of educational policy and the maintenance of oversight over the administration of schools in their districts; and

WHEREAS, Even the selection of the community superintendent by community school boards is subject to the approval or ratification of the Chancellor; and

WHEREAS, The abolition of community school boards will completely eliminate a local voice in the administration of local schools; and

WHEREAS, Notwithstanding the disappointing turnout in most school board elections, where there have been important issues at stake, the turnout has been significantly larger than the average turnout citywide; and

WHEREAS, Even in districts with a low turnout, thousands of voters do participate in local school board elections; and

WHEREAS, Abolition of community school boards will seriously undermine the ability of many individuals, minority groups and community based organizations that cannot have their views heard in a citywide forum; and

WHEREAS, This is not a time for less democracy in the governmental processes of our city;

NOW THEREFORE, Be it resolved that the City Council hereby calls upon the State Legislature to reject demands to dismantle or abolish community school boards.