



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 23

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to institute a moratorium on school closings and forced “co-locations” in existing schools for a period of at least one year, effective July 1, 2014, in order to study the impact of these policies on all New York City communities, and in particular whether such policies are having a disparate impact on low-income communities, communities of color, disabled students and homeless students.

By Council Members Rose, Constantinides, Gentile, Johnson, Reynoso, Dromm, Deutsch and Mendez

Whereas, From 2002 to 2013, the Bloomberg Administration opened 654 new public schools, including 166 charter schools; and

Whereas, To accommodate these new schools, the Department of Education (DOE) closed more than 160 schools and co-located hundreds of others inside existing school buildings; and

Whereas, The DOE’s decisions to close or co-locate schools frequently involve the loss of critical space and programs, which can have serious impacts on students’ education; and

Whereas, When two or more schools are co-located inside an existing school building, issues regarding space utilization can be extremely disruptive; and

Whereas, Co-located schools must share common spaces, such as the auditorium, gymnasium, cafeteria and libraries, which may reduce or restrict access by some students; and

Whereas, Other school space that may be affected by co-locations includes cluster rooms, labs, offices, storage rooms and specialized spaces for special education; and

Whereas, To accommodate a new incoming school, the host school may have to give up some classroom space which may result in increased class sizes in some cases; and

Whereas, Whenever the DOE proposes a school closure or co-location or other significant change in

school utilization, the Department is required by the State Education Law to prepare an Educational Impact Statement (EIS), the official document assessing the impact that a proposed change will have on school services; and

Whereas, According to a July 2010 report by the New York City Public Advocate, the EIS does not provide adequate information for members of the school community to understand and comment about how students will be affected by these decisions; and

Whereas, Further, the Public Advocate's report found that parents surveyed in affected schools did not know how the programs in their school would be impacted by a co-location; and

Whereas, School closures can have a negative impact on the education of students attending schools targeted for closure as well as surrounding schools; and

Whereas, Many of the students most at-risk, including special education students and English Language Learners, are displaced by many of these school closures and may eventually drop out as a result; and

Whereas, A 2009 report by the Center for New York City Affairs found that as the lowest achieving large schools were closed, thousands of students, particularly new immigrants and children receiving special education services, were diverted to the remaining large schools which were ill equipped to serve such a large influx of students with challenging needs and became failing schools that were subsequently closed; and

Whereas, Additionally, a January 2010 analysis by the Independent Budget Office (IBO) found that closing high schools usually had greater concentrations of high needs students, students from low income households and students living in temporary housing compared to non closing schools; and -

Whereas, Thus, based on the IBO analysis, school closures could indeed have a disparate impact on low-income communities and high needs students; and

Whereas, Given that closures and co-locations can disrupt students' education and decrease their access to school facilities such as classrooms, gymnasiums, libraries and cafeterias, the process should not be taken

lightly; and

Whereas, Before these policies continue, the DOE should be required to provide a detailed assessment of the full and long term impact of school closings and co-locations on all communities; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to institute a moratorium on school closings and forced “co-locations” in existing schools for a period of at least one year, effective July 1, 2014, in order to study the impact of these policies on all New York City communities, and in particular whether such policies are having a disparate impact on low-income communities, communities of color, disabled students and homeless students.

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