



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1120

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass a bill to amend the education law in relation to the establishment of an Independent Institute for Research and Accountability, which would provide the public with an ongoing evaluation and assessment of programs and initiatives at the New York City Department of Education.

By The Speaker (Council Member Miller) and Council Members Addabbo Jr., Brewer, Gennaro, Gentile, James, Koppell, Perkins, Seabrook, Stewart and Weprin

Whereas, Despite major changes in school governance, including granting control over the City's school system to the Mayor on July 1, 2002, the dissolution of the old Board of Education and establishment of the New York City Department of Education, the merger of 40 school districts into 10 regions, the abolition of the City's community school boards and other subsequent education reforms, it is unclear whether the City's public schools are improving; and

Whereas, The City currently allocates \$14 billion to the public school system, and it is imperative that only those programs and initiatives in the classroom and at the school, district, region and system-wide levels that are effective continue to receive funding, while those that are demonstrated to be ineffective are discontinued; and

Whereas, Unfortunately, the New York City Department of Education does not provide critical information to the public regarding the Department's programs and initiatives, making it impossible to determine which are successful; and

Whereas, There have been numerous attempts to access and analyze Departmental data, as well as public calls for greater review of the Department's actions; and

Whereas, After discrepancies between reports from the Independent Budget Office and the Department

of Education on class size reduction efforts, in January 2005 the Council and the Deputy Minority Leader of the New York State Senate called for the State Comptroller's Office to conduct an audit on class size data to ensure that over \$100 million in class size reduction funds were spent appropriately; and

Whereas, In 2003, due to the cost overruns and delays in school construction and repairs, the Council passed legislation over mayoral veto to mandate quarterly reports from the school construction authority on any projects that were past deadline and over budget; and

Whereas, During this academic year, experts in the field of education, parents and the Council have questioned the Department's reports that City students are outperforming their predecessors on standardized exams, as well as the methodology of the exams, and have called for an independent body, similar to that of Chicago's Consortium on School Research, to review exam results; and

Whereas, The City Council's Commission on the Campaign for Fiscal Equity recommended the creation of an independent body to conduct research and assessments needed to report on system reforms, recommend specific interventions to assist students based on performance results, provide data to the public, instill public confidence in the City's school system and help the public and local leadership use such findings to inform both policy and practice; and

Whereas, An independent analysis of school programs and initiatives would assist the City in targeting specific resources, such as after-school programs, smaller class sizes and more highly qualified teachers where they are most needed and support successful reform initiatives; and

Whereas, There would be greater public confidence in assessments of Department of Education programs and initiatives if any such review was disengaged from political pressures; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, The Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass a bill to amend the education law in relation to the establishment of an Independent Institute for Research and Accountability, which would provide the public with an ongoing evaluation and assessment of programs and initiatives at the New York City Department of Education.

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