



Senate Education

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ALBANY - (05/10/22, 9:45 a.m., Webcast)

The Senate Standing Committee on Education met Tuesday morning to consider eight bills. Chair Shelley Mayer, Ranker James Tedisco, and Senators Joseph Addabbo Jr., John Brooks, Robert Jackson, John Liu, John Mannion, Elijah Reichlin-Melnick, Sean Ryan, Joseph Griffo, Daniel Stec, and Alexis Weik attended.

Chair Mayer commented this would be the last Senate Education committee meeting and thanked all the members and staff for their efforts this year.

The following bills were reported to First Reading:

[SB 547](#) (00:02:20) By Mayer, Shelley. Relates to reimbursement for studies for districts subject to reorganization.

Chair Mayer said the bill allows for reimbursement for the planning process of the consolidation of schools.

[SB 652](#) (00:03:06) By Sanders, Jr., James. Relates to establishing a task force on safety in school transportation.

Senator Weik asked if a task force was necessary since cameras were already being used on buses and the conversation about child safety was happening without the task force.

Chair Mayer said the bill was initially passed in 2019 and this task force will investigate more than just cameras in school transit, including the distance kids must walk to reach a school bus pick-up point.

Senator Jackson said the bill addresses safety issues for children.

Senator Weik changed her vote from without recommendation to aye.

[SB 1626](#) (00:05:16) By Skoufis, James. Relates to the location of the annual school district elections.

Chair Mayer said the bill is supported by the NYS Council of School Superintendents and the NYS School Boards Association.

[SB 3472](#) By Biaggi, Alessandra. Requires feminine hygiene products to be offered for free in non-public schools.

[SB 7338](#) (00:06:20) By Jordan, Daphne. Provides for the dissolution of union free school district number eight of the town of Canaan in the county of Columbia, makes technical corrections; repealer.

Chair Mayer said she is involved in an effort to distribute ongoing health insurance and benefits that were promised to some employees after a school in a specialized district closed. She said the closure occurred by legislation. She added that the employees had not been paid but were promised payment by the Superintendent or school board for that district.

[SB 8615](#) (00:07:41) By May, Rachel. Relates to first aid instruction for coaches and staff of high school athletics.

Chair Mayer said the bill is supported by NYS Council of School Superintendents and the NYSPHSAA.

The following bills were reported and committed to Finance:

[SB 392](#) By Kaminsky, Todd. Requires nonpublic and private elementary and secondary schools to require their prospective employees to submit fingerprints for the purpose of criminal background checks.

[SB 8924](#) (00:08:17) By Liu, John. Requires that instruction in public schools aligned to the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework.

Senator Liu said the bill starts to address the need for culturally sensitive education in New York schools, especially due to increases in anti-Semitism, hate speech, and violent acts against people of color.

Senator Weik said the bill sounded like Critical Race Theory (CRT) and asked if CRT would be mandated to be taught in schools throughout New York. Senator Liu said the bill provides culturally sensitive curriculum in schools that would teach American History through multiple viewpoints, including that of Asian Americans.

Chair Mayer said the Board of Regents and State Education Department did a thoughtful and sensitive job in proposing a framework for all schools to adopt and the bill is consistent with the framework as well as the nuanced, age appropriate, and factually based education that students have asked to be implemented.

Weik stated the bill referenced the differences in power and privilege which is part of CRT. She argued that the bill could be divisive and point out differences in culture instead of joining them together. She said basic K-12 education should be about reading, writing, arithmetic and so on, not teaching bias against one another.

Chair Mayer disagreed with the characterization of the bill and said the bill is about educating students about the diversity of experiences in America in a positive manner, including the Holocaust and history from the Asian American viewpoint which is not currently being taught.

Liu stated that all subjects should be taught in a positive manner but not all the history of the country is positive and including multiple perspectives of American history is important to understand multiple cultural perspectives.

Senator Reichlin-Melnick said that no one wants curriculum to teach people to be biased or to be ashamed of their race or American history but teaching kids about the multiple cultural perspectives of the diverse people in America is a positive. He stated that acknowledging that America is filled with people from different backgrounds and that highlights the need to speak about inequities and struggles of all Americans. Reichlin Melnick said he supports teaching the experiences of all Americans and the goals of the bill.

Senator Mannion mentioned his time working in public education with colleagues and students of diverse backgrounds as a rationale for elevating marginalized voices in schools.

Senator Jackson said that passing the bill would not be divisive and all teachers must be aware and up to date with the diverse experiences of all populations living in the state. He highlighted his personal diverse attributes as well as stating that every person should attempt to understand the diverse people of the state.

Senator Ryan said that teaching should not shy away from facts and history. He stated there was a contentious fight through the legislature to educate students on the facts of the mass immigration event. Ryan said reading, writing, and arithmetic is not enough in school and a full accounting of American history and the diverse nature of the state is necessary.

Weik said she supports cultural sensitivity, including teaching about the Holocaust, so mistakes of the past are not repeated but stated language in the bill sounds the same as CRT. Weik asked if school districts could opt out of the law. Liu said that intent of the bill is not meant to have an opt out because the subject matter is necessary, and the framework is used as the method for adoption.

Mayer said the framework was to provide guidance for adoption for curriculum and legislation has been provided for mandatory teaching of several subjects in the past.

Senator Tedisco said Weik had a point and that she supports the understanding of diversity. He stated his experience teaching diversity in multiple subjects as a Special Education teacher and all teachers should be obligated to teach diversity. Tedisco also stated that his wife is Korean and he is sensitive to discrimination against Koreans but said many cultures throughout history have been marginalized at some point. He stated that there should have been statewide hearings about this bill due to the number of parents coming to school board meetings to express concern over curriculum and political philosophies being tied to the curriculum. Tedisco recommended teachers should learn more about diversity so they can better incorporate diversity concepts into the individual subject matter they instruct. He concluded that parents may want to teach more about diversity at home and that America is great because of its diversity.

Mayer said the Board of Regents have made a complete rebuttal of the concept that CRT is contained in their framework and offered to share the report with the committee.

Liu said the Board of Regents had conducted several forums across the state about the framework that parents could attend and the impetus for the bill came from violence and discrimination against Asian Americans across the state. Liu blamed schools for not doing a good enough job teaching students about the Asian American experience in history.

Senators Weik, Tedisco, Griffo, and Stec voted in the Negative.

Senator Weik stated that parents were not included in the conversation and her hand was up during the meeting to comment further.

Chair Mayer replied that Senator Weik would have an opportunity to comment further as the bill moved along.

The Clerk asked Senators Griffo and Weik to send updated voting sheets.

Tony Perotti / New York StateWatch

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Committee Member Contact Information (click or mouse over): [Mayer, Shelley \(D\)](#) / [Addabbo, Jr., Joseph P. \(D\)](#) / [Brooks, John \(D\)](#) / [Brouk, Samra \(F\) \(D\)](#) / [Jackson, Robert \(D\)](#) / [Liu, John \(D\)](#) / [Mannion, John W. \(F\) \(D\)](#) / [Reichlin-Melnick, Elijah \(F\) \(D\)](#) / [Ryan, Sean M. \(F\) \(D\)](#) / [Stavisky, Toby Ann \(D\)](#) / [Tedisco, James \(R\)](#) / [Griffo, Joseph A. \(R\)](#) / [Oberacker, Peter \(F\) \(R\)](#) / [Stec, Daniel G. \(F\) \(R\)](#) / [Weik, Alexis \(F\) \(R\)](#)

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