

Suffolk Region

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Gerry Bringmann
Legislative Advocacy Chair – Advocacy Team
gerardbringmann@gmail.com
legislature@suffolkpta.org

Report of February 4, 2019

On Saturday, Feb. 2nd, Suffolk Region PTA was a co-sponsor, along with Eastern Suffolk BOCES, of the Longwood School District's 15th Regional Legislative Breakfast. The event was attended by approx. 300 people, including Congressman Lee Zeldin and a number of New York State Senators & Assemblymen. There were presentations on a "Statewide Perspective of Education" and how it related to the Governor's Budget Proposal (presented by Dr Charles Dedrick & Greg Berck, Esq. – NYS Council of School Superintendents) as well as "Supporting Shifting Student Needs" (which was presented by Dr. Julie Lutz – COO of Eastern Suffolk BOCES), both of which were very informative. There was also a approx. 90 min. session where members of the audience asked questions of the Legislators on a wide range of topics including School Safety, Mental Health, Voting in Schools, Teachers Retirement Costs, Vaping, Teachers Performance Reviews, etc. On behalf of Suffolk Region, I asked what can be done to expedite the processing of our districts submitted "Smart Schools" spending plans, so that our schools can proceed with badly needed projects that would be covered under this program. While Assemblyman Doug Smith was very enthusiastic about working to find a solution to this problem (& he appeared to be supported by Assemblyman Palumbo), I was disappointed that the other Assemblymen, as well as the three State Senators on the podium remained silent on this issue.

On Thursday Eve, Jan. 31st, it was my pleasure to present a session on the "2019-2020 NYS Education & Budget Forecast", along with Bevin Llanes & Geri Coleman-Odom @ Winter Workshops. Our hostess was Debbie Grayer, who asked a few key questions to add some dialogue with the participates during our presentation. Some highlights were discussions on the School Aid increase of \$956 million dollars statewide (a promising starting point in the negotiations for a non-election year), the fact that despite the increase that some schools could still lose State Aid based on formulas (Example: Connetquot is currently slated to lose approx. 1 million dollars), the Education Equity Formula (which mandates that schools of similar grade levels within a district have relatively equal expenses), School Aid Growth Cap (which proposes using a 10yr average annual income growth calculation), Expense Base Aid (which proposes to merge the 11 expense aid categories into one called Services Aid in 2020-21), the Tax Cap (Governor proposes making this permanent and it looks like this will happen, but there is still the possibility of some additional exemptions being included, however nothing major), Teacher & Principal Evaluation or APPR (schools will not be required to use state test as the measure of student performance), Mental Health Support (only grant money to survey a districts needs), Election Day as a State Holiday (this would close schools on Election Day, but not address the possibility of schools being used for "early voting", which appears will be passed into law), Raising the minimum age to purchase tobacco and vaping products from 18 to 21 and placing further restrictions on where these products can be sold ...and lastly the possibility that the State will legalize Recreational Cannabis (unfortunately, it's a good possibility this will pass).

Regarding the last item, I would like to place a motion on the floor that "In the event New York State should legalize the use of recreational cannabis, that Suffolk Region PTA, in support of the NYS-PTA position against the legalization of this substance, petition the Suffolk County Legislature to ban the sale of recreational cannabis within our County"

Respectfully submitted ... Gerry Bringmann

