

## Suffolk Region



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### Special Education Report February 2019

Happy Valentine's Day! On February 10-11, 2019, the NYS PTA will be having the Legislative Summit and Lobby Day in Albany, NY. On these 2 days, PTA members from all over the state will hear from experts in the field on issues affecting our children and how we can make a difference. On Monday, we will go to the State Capital in Albany to speak to and advocate for our children with our elected state officials.

Some of the many important topics that will be addressed are:

- 1) **Mental health support for students and their families:** In the governor's 2019 proposed budget, addresses the need for early intervention. "Trauma at early ages has been found to lead to learning difficulties and ongoing behavioral problems" (FY2019 Executive Budget Briefing Book). The Budget is allocating \$250,000 to create enhanced mental health support grants for community schools. The grants, once up and running will be used to provide "wrap-around mental health services, improve school climate, combat violence and bullying and support social-emotional learning" What exactly is "wrap-around mental health services"? According to the ACMH (Association for Children's Mental Health Lansing, MI) it is a way or process of working with children and youth with serious mental health challenges and their families. During the wraparound process, community based services and supports "**wrap around**" a child or youth and their family in their home, school, and community in an effort to help meet their needs.
- 2) **Funding for enough guidance counselors, school nurses, arts and music education for children:** these are vital issues that we need to advocate for, there are children who fall through the cracks due to the large caseloads that these guidance counselors have. Music and Art programs are vital for **all** students, as these can be outlets for students to express themselves.
- 3) **Recovery High Schools and programs for students with substance use disorders:** with the different substance abuse/use epidemics that are affecting all counties throughout the nation, it is imperative that we provide a safe and therapeutic environment where students who are dealing with these issues can continue to get an education and continue to work on their recovery. We need these resources to help our children be successful.
- 4) **School and bus safety measures:** The Governor in his proposed 2019=2020 budget new proposals in his fiscal year 2020 Executive Budget to bolster student safety on school buses. The Governor's comprehensive proposal would authorize school districts to install stop-arm cameras on school buses, increase the fine for passing a stopped school bus and require students to wear seatbelts on school buses. ( See press release dated January 23, 2019 @ [www.governor.ny.gov/news](http://www.governor.ny.gov/news))
- 5) **Opposition to the legalization of recreational marijuana:** Governor Cuomo has made a big push for the legalization of marijuana in NYS. Back in July 2018, the governor enlisted the NYS Department of Health to do an assessment and report on the legalization of recreational marijuana. You can find these reports on the NYS department of Health website: [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov) The NY Times reported back on December 17, 2018: "Legalization could bring in between \$248 million and \$677 million in new tax revenue in its first year, the report said. In addition, it could also ease the opioid crisis and mitigate racial disparities in the criminal justice system." Also stated:" The commission, which the governor convened in January, concluded that the benefits of taxing and regulating the drug outweighed any negative effects."

If you are unable to go advocate and lobby at the Legislative Summit, next week, you can still have your voice heard. By contacting your local elected officials, you can make a difference.

Resources:

- 1) FY 2019 Executive Budget Briefing Book: [www.budget.ny.gov](http://www.budget.ny.gov)
- 2) NYSPTA: Legislative Summit and Lobby Day: [www.NYSPTA.org](http://www.NYSPTA.org)
- 3) NYS Department of Health: [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)
- 4) Association for Children's Mental Health: [www.achm-mi.org](http://www.achm-mi.org)
- 5) NYS Department of Education: [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)