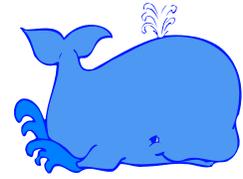


Suffolk Region PTA



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Vaccine Mandate for New York City Teachers in Effect

October 4th was the first day teachers and other school staff members who work in New York City had to be vaccinated. The New York City Public Schools employs about 148,000. Over 90% did comply while about 10,000 did not. Some wished there was another option for them like weekly testing but medical and religious exemptions were granted. Unvaccinated teachers are on unpaid leave and cannot file for unemployment insurance. However, the teachers union was able to secure their medical benefits. The Department of Education has 9,000 vaccinated substitute teachers who are prepared to step in for any staffing shortages related to the mandate. This mandate affects Long Island residents who teach in NYC.

Governor Settles School Funding Lawsuit with the Pledge to Fulfill Foundation Aid Plan

Gov. Hochul announced that New York State has reached an agreement to settle and discontinue the New Yorkers for Students' Educational Rights v. New York State case, following through on the State's commitment to fully fund the current Foundation Aid formula to New York's school districts over three years and ending the State's prior opposition to providing this much-needed funding to our students.

The litigation, which has been ongoing since 2014, sought to require New York State to fully fund the Foundation Aid formula that was put into place following the historic Campaign for Fiscal Equity cases, and had been previously opposed by the State. Foundation Aid was created in 2007, and takes school district

wealth and student need into account to create an equitable distribution of state funding to schools. However, New York State has never fully funded Foundation Aid. Plaintiffs include parents and other education stakeholders, including New York State School Board Association, the Rural Schools Association, the New York State Council of School Superintendents, the New York State PTA and others.

The new settlement requires New York State to phase-in full funding of Foundation Aid by the FY 2024 budget. In the FY 2022 Enacted State Budget approved in April, the Executive and Legislature agreed to fully fund Foundation Aid by the FY 2024 budget and enshrined this commitment into law.

A breakdown of currently anticipated Foundation Aid funding:

- FY 2022: \$19.8 billion, covering 30% of the existing shortfall
- FY 2023: Approximately \$21.3 billion, covering 50% of the anticipated shortfall
- FY 2024: Approximately \$23.2 billion, eliminating the anticipated shortfall, and funding the full amount of Foundation Aid for all school districts

New York Could Possibly Add the COVID Vaccine to the Required Shots for School Children

Gov. Kathy Hochul and top state officials will consider adding the COVID-19 vaccine to the state's list of required inoculations for students attending New York school districts, as federal regulators are expected to approve the shot for children ages 5 to 11 in October. Hochul spoke with White House coronavirus response coordinator Dr. Jeff Zients. Zients called on all U.S. governors to start registering pediatricians in their respective states to prepare for vaccinating children younger than 12 against COVID-19 when approved by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration.

The number of new child COVID cases remains exceptionally high, and has increased with the start of school and the emergence of the more transmissible COVID delta variant. Cases of U.S. children testing positive for COVID-19 increased 6% from Sept. 23 to Oct. 7, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association. Earlier this month, the state of California announced it would require the COVID vaccine in schools in July 2022, or in time for the 2022-23 school year.

Zients stated that federal officials will be ready to vaccinate millions of children quickly as soon as the FDA gives the green light for low-dose kids vaccines as early as the end of October. He laid out a widespread public education plan to encourage parents to get their children vaccinated. Hochul urged New York pediatricians to enroll in the state's program to prepare to administer the COVID vaccine to children. The governor will hold a video conference call with pediatricians from around the state in the coming days to ensure they have an efficient federal delivery and distribution strategy.

Legislative Package to Combat Opioid Crisis in Effect

Legislation aimed toward reducing drug-related overdose deaths across New York State and encouraging those suffering from addiction to seek help in their recovery was recently signed by the Governor:

- Legislation S.911/A.2354 amends the criminal procedure law, the civil practice law and rules and the executive law to promote the use of opioid antagonists in preventing drug-related overdoses. This bill will decriminalize possession of opioid antagonists, which are drugs that block opioids by attaching to opioid receptors without activating them.
- Legislation S.1795/A.868 works to establish a program for the use of medication assisted substance use disorder treatment for incarcerated individuals in state and local correctional facilities. Expanding medication assisted treatment, MAT, across state and local facilities will allow incarcerated individuals access to medications and therapies to provide them the opportunity to overcome substance use and lessen the likelihood that they may suffer drug-related overdoses upon their reentry into society.
- Legislation S.2523/A.868 decriminalizes the possession and sale of hypodermic needles and syringes. The act of decriminalizing drug-related paraphernalia contributes to public safety by permitting harm reduction approaches for those suffering from substance use disorder and by reducing the rate at which HIV and hepatitis are transmitted.
- Legislation S.6044/A.128 establishes an online directory for distributors of opioid antagonists making them more accessible to New Yorkers who may want to equip themselves with these life-saving medications. The directory is to be maintained by the Office of Addiction Services and Supports on their website.
- Legislation S.7228/A.5511 expands the number of eligible crimes committed by individuals with a substance use disorder that may be considered for diversion to a substance use treatment program and updates the term "substance abuse" to "substance use." This ensures judges can order an

individual to treatment instead of incarceration, allowing them a greater chance for successful, long-term rehabilitation.

Village of Patchogue Opts Out of Cannabis

In accordance with the Marijuana Taxation Act, the Village of Patchogue Board of Trustees voted to opt out of both the allowing of retail cannabis dispensaries and on-site cannabis consumption establishments and for a code amend to prohibit the smoking of cannabis tobacco, and similar substances, until future information is provided by the government. According to New York State law, cities, towns, and villages can opt out of allowing adult-use cannabis retail dispensaries or on-site consumption licenses from locations within their jurisdictions. However, municipalities cannot opt out of adult-use legalization. All municipalities, according to NYS, are not permitted to prohibit the operation or licensure of adult-use, medical or cannabinoid hemp licenses. However, they are permitted to pass laws and regulations to govern the time, place and manner of the retail dispensaries.

Under the Clean Air Act regulations, cannabis has been included as part of the prohibition of tobacco in closed areas. Patchogue Village code also prohibits smoking within 50 feet of a government, library or school facility. As for cigarette smoking, the ban would have to encompass both cigarettes and marijuana on sidewalks.

Suffolk Lawmakers Approve New Sewer Projects

Two long-awaited sewer projects cleared their final legislative hurdles as Suffolk County lawmakers approved bills that will allow the largest Suffolk sewer expansion in decades to move forward. The projects, approved by voter referendum in 2019, are part of the Suffolk County Coastal Resiliency Initiative that ultimately will connect more than 5,500 homes to sewer service. The sewer projects, which will cost a total of \$383 million, are designed to improve water quality by removing outdated septic systems and cesspools that contribute to nitrogen pollution, algal blooms, fish kills and other water quality issues. About 75% of Suffolk homes, or about 360,000, are not connected to sewers, county officials have said.