

The Brooklyn Schools

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Dear Madam Chair and Mr. Chair, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Patricia Buell, I am a first year superintendent in Brooklyn.

I support raised bill 5167 which would allow districts to increase the amount of unexpended funds that a board of education is allowed to deposit into a nonlapsing account at the end of the fiscal year. Currently when a district realizes a savings in their current fiscal year these funds are not accessible to the Board of Education to offset deficits in a following year. Example: Brooklyn has had 29 students with disabilities move into district between September 2017 and February 2018. Three of these students require specialized programming in an out of district placement. These funds are not in the budget. As a district we are required to reduced anticipated expenditures or seek additional funding from the Town. This year, this total tuition and transportation costs exceeded \$250,000. Example: As I explore quotes for insurances, the initial quotes were returned at 32% increase. If Brooklyn was to consider a self-funded insurance option, the rate increases may be lower, however the Board of Education would not have the funds to pay for the stop loss coverage, especially during the first year.

I support sections of raised bill 183. Section 4 of this bill permits “exclusionary time out” which is the temporary, monitored separation of a student in a non-locking setting away from an ongoing activity for the purpose of calming or deescalating such student behavior. There are times that students become dysregulated and require alternative strategies and supports to become regulated and ready to learn. Not all of these strategies can be offered in the classroom without causing a significant disruption to peers in their classroom. We have students who have significant trauma who display very disruptive behaviors in the classroom that can cause peers to become traumatized by witnessing these disruptive behaviors or at a minimum cause an educational disruption.

I support the raised bill 5171 an act prohibiting the executive branch from making rescissions or other reductions to the education cost sharing grant during the fiscal year. This year Brooklyn ECS was reduced by \$925,961 which was a 13.3% reduction. This resulted in four mid year reduction or elimination of programs. We offered early

retirement incentives and laid off two new teachers and two non-certified positions.

For every layoff, we needed to budget for further cuts to account for unemployment expenses which caused the cuts to be deeper and unemployment expenses will impact budgeting for FY 19. This was significant to the district and the community. The impact was felt beyond these staff members as we had to transfer a teacher into a position they have not taught for decades, school and bus schedules had to change dramatically to reduce the impact of reducing additional teachers.

I support raised bill 186 which allows school counselors to provide occupational and mental health counseling. As a former director of pupil services students make connections to different counselors and school counselors are very competent and capable of providing this service.

I support raised bill 5168 which would provide a summer learning grant opportunities for schools to offer summer recreation and learning opportunities. This funding would support literacy and numeracy instruction and has a parental involvement component. All students experience summer learning loss and this would positively impact schools' ability to reach students and potentially mitigate the impact of this loss.

I support raised bill 5170 an act concerning students' right to privacy in their mobile electronic devices. Schools have significant responsibility to take measures to protect students and staff in schools. Electronic devices often have information that can support safe learning environments.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these matters. I appreciate all that you do to for our communities and state.

Sincerely,

Patricia L. Buell
Superintendent