

THE NEW YORK STATE SOLUTIONS NOT SUSPENSIONS ACT (S767A)



Across New York State, there were 82,839 student suspensions during the 2015-2016 school year according to the New York State School Report Card (the most recent data available). That amounts to more than 460 suspensions per school day. Preliminary analysis of the 2015-2016 national civil rights data shows that New York students lost 686,000 days of instruction due to school suspensions. This equates to 3,800+ school years and over 4 million hours of school. Further, Black students statewide were 1.25 times more likely to be arrested in school and 4.76 times more likely to be referred to law enforcement while in school.

The Solutions Not Suspensions Bill is designed to reduce this reliance on suspensions and punitive discipline in order to transform schools, and grow school-level capacity to remedy the root causes of student behavior and help students, rather than limiting young peoples' access to education.

This bill proposes to bring comprehensive school climate reform to all schools in New York State:

- (1) End suspensions for students in grades kindergarten through three;
- (2) Restorative justice and other alternative discipline in place of harsh and ineffective removals from school;
- (3) Students who are suspended are able to better get back on track by limiting the amount of time that a student can be out of school to 20 days and by providing access to work and alternative instruction during the suspension;
- (4) Stop inappropriate interactions between school resource officers and students that push young people into the criminal justice system; and
- (5) Support schools in building the capacities of school staff and students to constructively resolve conflict, collectively hold each other accountable for their actions and create learning environments that value the dignity of everyone.

Statements from Students:



This act supports alternative discipline and at the same time gives suspended students a chance to get back on track by limiting the time they can be suspended. One thing I really support is holding students accountable for their behavior while also keeping them in school and in class. In my school, suspensions and behavior issues play a major role in students' academic performance. Students miss out on classwork and learning when they are kicked out of class. However, there are always ways to deescalate a situation and better support students, and this act promotes that value.

– Steven, High School Senior in the Bronx



New York will be a better place if fewer students are suspended and more students are in class – meaning students can be there to get their education, pass their exams, and graduate on time. You have to be considerate to students' whole stories because they still have responsibilities and schools are there to give guidance and help shape peoples' futures. By students losing out on their education they lose out on a lot of information that's important for their growth and career goals. Choose to support students instead.

– Qunaisha, High School Senior in Brooklyn



I ask that you now support and pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act, which acknowledges that suspensions and harsh discipline and even incarceration are so unnecessary and there are better ways to resolve problems in school. With this bill, there would be permanent changes not just in our schools but in our communities and in our children's life chances.

– Gary, High School Senior in Brooklyn

The Children's Defense Fund-New York (CDF-NY) combines research, public education, policy development, programming, organizing and advocacy to improve the systems and policies that impact children. For more information on our education justice work, please contact Charlotte Pope at cpope@childrensdefense.org.