



Erie County Association of School Boards

Vol. 2; Issue 5 January 2023



Dear Members,

2023. I can't believe it has arrived. My family was just talking about how odd it is to say it is 2023. That sounds like a year used in some far distant futuristic sci-fi movie. But here it is, setting up shop and building its network.

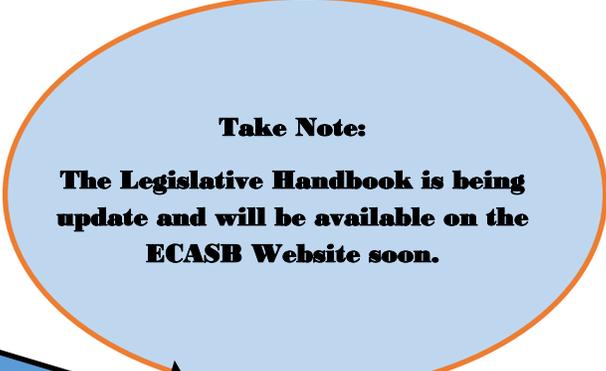
I am not one who takes stock in writing New Year Resolutions. I don't want to start something just because the year is starting anew. I have plenty on my plate to keep me busy. I don't need a new hobby or habit to add to the controlled chaos.

If I were going to have one, it might be to find a better time management system when searching bills; BillTrack50 makes it so easy and I can get lost in it. Because it is a new legislative session, the bills are being introduced fast and furiously. I have set up a Bills of Interest 2023 sheet on BillTrack50 and have given anyone with an account permission to query and add to the sheet. In just a week, I have added 61 bills to watch to the sheet. Don't have an account? Email me at jsullivan@e1b.org and I will set you up with one.

I hope 2023 is treating you well so far. I have a lot of hopes for advocacy this year. The taste of success with the passing of bill 09878 has me wanting to feel that feeling again and again.

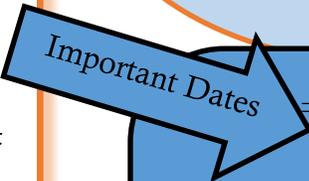
We have lots of fun things planned for January through June. I look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Jane



Take Note:

The Legislative Handbook is being update and will be available on the ECASB Website soon.



Important Dates

- ⇒ Next Legislative Team Meeting, Jan. 19, 2023 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
- ⇒ Legislative Breakfast 2022 has been rescheduled to January 21st at the Grapevine Banquets, 333 Dick Road in Depew.
- ⇒ ECASB Award nominations are open. Start nominating deserving individuals. Visit <https://www.ecasb.org/awards-1> for details about the awards and nomination forms.
- ⇒ Sign up to attend the in-person Capital Conference on Feb. 15, 2023 with NYSS-BA, but please also send Jane an Email.

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# time to talk

## Bridging Local Government and School Districts:

A conversation with Deputy County Executive Lisa Chimera

COVID-19. Someday, conversations will not begin with talk of the pandemic; but one thing was made clear, COVID taught us all how important connection is. County government is not something often associated with school districts, but during the pandemic schools looked to the County for guidance and answers nearly every day. It is apparent the two entities are entirely connected; after a conversation with Lisa Chimera, the newly appointed Deputy County Executive, it is certain the two can be collaborative partners.

Lisa, married to Ken-Ton Board of Education Trustee Matt Chimera, began her career in education. She taught for 34 years in the Ken-Ton School District teaching students with disabilities. During her time in education, and serving as a curriculum learning specialist, she championed the practice of co-teaching. After designing and developing a model, and providing data to measure its success, Lisa provided professional development for teachers and administrators to ensure that practice would remain.

Lisa was appointed to her new position in early November 2022 and since then has experienced not one, but two history-making snowstorms. The second storm forced our meeting to Zoom, but she lamented that she wished we could have met in her office, as there I would find all the evidence I need to see just how closely related county government is to public education and each one of the school districts in Erie County.

Lisa believes her government career really was established out of the issues she found herself tackling as an educator. She would go home and struggle with what students and their families experienced outside of school, and she could see the impact

those experiences had on a student's ability to stay focused in school. These issues included childcare, transportation, food insecurities, housing, poverty, all manners of abuse, and mental health. She found ways in education to address these issues, but she knew she wanted to do more. And then someone asked her to run for the Town of Tonawanda Town Board. In 2005, she ousted an incumbent and served for the next 15 years. While on the town board, she focused on after school programs, creating community centers, and connecting the school to community organizations that could help provide services for students and community members alike.

With a vacancy in the County Legislature, Lisa was approached and asked to take the seat of District 3. She saw it as another opportunity that coincided with career in education. After her appointment, she successfully ran for two more terms. Again, she found herself focused on those same issues plaguing her career in education. In this role, she was able to develop incentives and funding for key community organizations that would help fight the poverty issues families were faced with, provide much needed health and wellness programs, and help those battling drug addictions. She was also able to address another area she is passionate about: the environment.

When Lisa first joined the County Legislature she was asked to chair a committee, something a bit unusual for a brand-new legislator. She was promised it was an easy one, and she was already passionate about the issues of health and wellness. She agreed and was appointed Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee for Erie County. Then COVID-19 hit, and Lisa rose to the challenges. Priority number one was finding childcare for children who were not typical childcare age. Lisa was very involved with the Emergency Childcare Task Force. The taskforce was able to open "virtual centers to provide a place for students to go and

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engage in education in a safe space while their parents went to work,” Lisa shares.

Now in the Deputy chair, Lisa is actively working at re-inventing a program that was just beginning in 2019 and was forced to the side because of the pandemic. “Live Well Erie” is a renewed initiative to ensure no one in Erie County is left behind, with a focus on three subgroups: children, working families, and seniors. Many of the goals of Live Well Erie are directly related to school communities and linking together government, schools and community partnerships. “Live Well Erie is a VISION to help every resident of Erie County achieve his or her full potential. It uses five guiding principles to focus on nine broad goals across the three populations.” (Erie County Webpage).



You can learn more about this program by visiting the webpage dedicated to the initiative at [Live Well Erie](#). Lisa is the co-chair of the initiative, as her background in education and government makes her the perfect person to guide this program and tackle these issues. Like many educators, Lisa’s decisions are guided by the data.

Having data has helped in many ways to help develop programs. One such program involved working with Erie 1 BOCES and Erie 2 CC BOCES: [SMART](#). “The Specialized Medical Assistance Response Team (SMART) is Erie County, New York’s volunteer public health emergency response organization. SMART is sponsored by the Erie County Department of Health and the Department of Emergency Medicine at Erie County Medical Center Corporation” (Erie County Webpage).



Lisa explains that the SMART initiative was created to address the social emotional needs of community members. She hopes to be able to help school districts connect with community partners to help schools find positive ways to provide services. Right now, the work is getting the word out about the program and having teachers, administrators, central office administration, and school social workers and psychologists know about the collaborative connections available.



Lisa says, “Education is everything. It addresses what happens when kids first enter school...and sets them up for their future.” When there are obstacles in a child’s way, school districts can look to county government for assistance. Initiatives such as Live Well Erie and SMART are just the beginnings of ways schools can partner with county government.

Lisa talked about the most recent snowstorm when pondering additional ways schools and county government could work together. “Schools anchor our communities in so many ways,” she declares. She then spoke about how the county works with the United Way to distribute Blizzard Boxes, which includes items such as nonperishable foods, batteries and contact resources, to community members ahead of a storm. Lisa would like to explore how schools may be able to become distribution centers for these boxes so they would reach more community members.

Lisa is keenly aware of the shortages in the educational community workforce. She sees SUNY Erie taking a huge role in

**From Top: Lisa Chimera, Deputy County Executive; Lisa swearing in as the Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee; Live Well Erie Logo; a group community members attending a SMART training.**



addressing these shortages. She would like to see an expansion of programs that bring SUNY Erie classes into local high schools through Erie 1 and Erie 2 CC BOCES. These classes would “engage students in career-based classes,” she states and adds, “We need to develop a cohesive plan to market careers in education and make it accessible to explore these careers while still in high school and to earning some college credit at the same time.”

Federal and state government is generally about policy, Lisa sees county government being about services. “We need to *keep* county government and schools connected and find *more ways* to be connected.” Lisa believes one of her responsibilities is to connect people and organizations. She uses the [Niagara River Greenway Commission](#) as an example. This commission supports student developed environmental projects. Students are given lessons on environmental issues from which they develop projects which are showcased in February each year since the program began with a grant. With the grant coming to an end, the county is now advocating for the state to continue funding this program, which directly benefits the community and school aged children alike.



Lisa hopes that her role as Deputy County Executive will continue to include forging connections between county government, schools, and community partners. When we all work together we can accomplish great things. Erie County is unusual in that it is comprised of all kinds of diverse groups of people from ethnic groups and urban and rural communities to all ranges of socio-economic backgrounds. Erie County has communities centered in the second largest city in the state to some of the most rural areas of New York. It is a microcosm of society. If we can find successful ways to bridge gaps and provide services here, we can model our successes to the rest of the nation.

**Top Photo:** Lisa Chimera;  
**Bottom Photo:** Students digging in to a Niagara River Greenworks project.



*“Today I am pleased to announce that Erie County Legislator Lisa Chimera has agreed to serve as Erie County’s next Deputy County Executive, and I look forward to working with her to continue moving Erie County forward. I have known Lisa for many years and she has the skill set and work ethic that this very demanding role calls for, and has already demonstrated her ability to identify issues and work collaboratively to solve problems many times,” said Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz. “As Deputy County Executive Lisa will take a lead role in the implementation of our Live Well Erie agenda, thereby helping to create a better county for all” ([Erie County Webpage](#)).*



# BILL ALERT

*ECASB uses Bill Track 50 for our bill tracking and advocacy needs. If you also have an interest in tracking bills, email Jane at [JSullivan@e1b.org](mailto:JSullivan@e1b.org); she will set you up with an account umbrellaed under the ECASB Bill Track 50 subscription. A basic training session was held on Sept. 29 and has been recorded. If you would like to view the video, please email Jane.*

The new 2023-2024 Legislature Session began on January 4, and our local Senators were quick to begin introducing the bills. Below is a list of the bills they support that are related to public education. Use your BillTrack50 account or Legiscan to learn more about each bill and communicate with us through your Legislative Team Representatives whether your district supports or opposes these bills.

## [State Senator George Borrello \(R\) District 57](#)



**S00032:** AN ACT to amend chapter 396 of the laws of 2012, amending the education law relating to services to out-of-state school districts by boards of cooperative educational services, in relation to making the provisions thereof permanent.

**S00044:** Enacts Jacobe's Law requiring school administrators to contact the parents or guardians of students when bullying or harassment has occurred.

**S00118:** AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to an exemption from certain vaccination requirements for school attendance based upon religious beliefs.

**S00197:** Authorizes school districts to establish an extraordinary needs reserve fund for the expenses of providing special education.

**S00234:** Establishes the crime of assault on sports officials and aggravated harassment of a sports official; makes aggravated harassment of a sports official a class B misdemeanor; requires the state education department to establish an information campaign to be distributed to all youth and school sports programs requiring such programs to disseminate information to parents and other spectators of such programs on the protections afforded sports officials.

**S00285:** Adds arts and music education as a common school branch that should be incorporated into the public school curriculum to provide a more well-rounded education for children.

**S00423:** Permits a school food authority to attribute moneys spent on purchases of food products from New York state farmers, growers, producers or processors made for its school breakfast program to the thirty percent of costs for school lunch service programs.

## [State Senator Patrick Gallivan \(R\) District 60](#)



**S00032:** AN ACT to amend chapter 396 of the laws of 2012, amending the education law relating to services to out-of-state school districts by boards of cooperative educational services, in relation to making the provisions thereof permanent.

**S00041:** AN ACT to amend the real property tax law, in relation to allowing for the taxation of state property for schools.

**S00075:** Requires vision screening examinations for students using examination devices and testing methods, including, but not limited to, the Snellen Eye Test Chart and automated vision screening devices.

**S00076:** AN ACT to amend the vehicle and traffic law, in relation to drivers of school buses using hands-free mobile telephones. \*note-this bill has a companion bill in the State Assembly-A00130, with no local sponsors.

# BILL ALERT - continued

- S00086:** Relates to exemptions available to veterans; requires school districts to provide the veterans alternative exemption; establishes that costs associated with such exemption shall be borne by the state.
- S00118:** AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to an exemption from certain vaccination requirements for school attendance based upon religious beliefs.
- S00197:** Authorizes school districts to establish an extraordinary needs reserve fund for the expenses of providing special education.
- S00230:** AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to the universal full-day pre-kindergarten program; and to repeal subdivision 4 of section -ee of such law relating thereto.
- S00234:** Establishes the crime of assault on sports officials and aggravated harassment of a sports official; makes aggravated harassment of a sports official a class B misdemeanor; requires the state education department to establish an information campaign to be distributed to all youth and school sports programs requiring such programs to disseminate information to parents and other spectators of such programs on the protections afforded sports officials.
- S00245:** Relates to when school personnel may adjust a student's dosage of insulin: under instructions from the prescriber or instructions from the parent or person in parental relationship where explicitly authorized by the prescriber.
- S00247:** AN ACT to amend the tax law, in relation to a sales and use tax exemption for school buses and related items.
- S00285:** Adds arts and music education as a common school branch that should be incorporated into the public school curriculum to provide a more well-rounded education for children.
- S001434:** An act to amend the state finance law, in relation to requiring itemization, by school district, of proposed appropriations to the education department for the support of school districts



## **State Senator Sean Ryan(D) District 61**

- S00089:** AN ACT to amend the general municipal law, in relation to waiving school taxes by a town, city, or county industrial development agency.
- S00859:** Provides that state lottery and video lottery gaming individual prizes in excess of one million dollars when aggregated exceeds twenty-five percent of a district's adjusted gross income shall be excluded from such district's adjusted gross income for the year.



## **State Senator Robert Ort (R) District 62**

- S00572:** Provides for the establishment of school speed limits of not less than fifteen miles per hour by the legislative body of any county or, if so delegated, by the legislative body of any locality within said county on a portion of a state highway, county or town road passing a school building.
- S00654:** AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to providing building aid for school security and safety improvements.
- S00658:** Establishes no polling place shall be located on the premises of any public or private elementary or secondary school or a school for preschool children.
- S00778:** AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to awarding high school diplomas to veterans; and repealing certain provisions of such law relating thereto.

# BILL ALERT - continued

**S00787:** AN ACT to amend the correction law, the executive law and the penal law, in relation to prohibiting sex offenders from living within a quarter mile of any school, park, playground or building in which child day care is provided.

**S00788:** AN ACT to amend the labor law, in relation to establishing a leave of absence for veterans.

**S00873:** Requires the regents to promulgate rules to allow and encourage the reading and posting in public schools excerpts of the writings and documents regarding American heritage.

**S00989:** Permits passage of a school budget that will require a tax levy that exceeds the tax levy limit if approved by a majority of the votes cast.

**S001480:** Requires the installation of panic buttons and additional door security devices in all school classrooms.

**S001434:** An act to amend the state finance law, in relation to requiring itemization, by school district, of proposed appropriations to the education department for the support of school districts



**[State Senator Timothy Kennedy \(D\) District 63](#)**

**S00056:** CONCURRENT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY proposing an amendment to the Constitution, in relation to education of pupils through undergraduate.

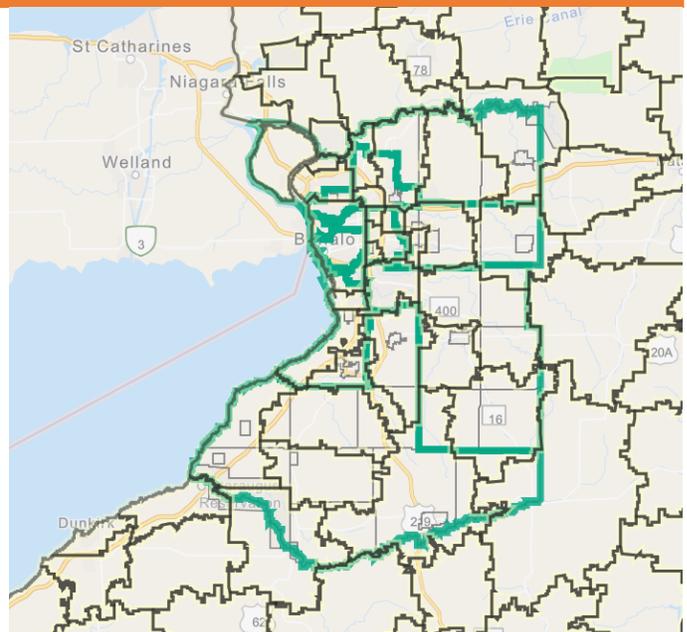
**S00245:** Relates to when school personnel may adjust a student's dosage of insulin: under instructions from the prescriber or instructions from the parent or person in parental relationship where explicitly authorized by the prescriber.

**S00730:** Requires the department of education to establish an education for environmental sustainability program to teach children the importance of conserving and protecting our environment.

## Mapping ECASB: An Interactive Data Map

I worked with Lisa Matthies-Wiza at the Erie County Office of GIS, who created and will continue to update an interactive map to show school boundaries and political districts. The map also uses data for all of NYS, so you can see districts that extend beyond Erie County. The updated Legislative Districts are still being updated from the Board of Elections, but once they are in place, Lisa will update the map again.

Take it out for a test run by visiting the [Erie County NY School District Interactive Map](#).



## Speaking to Legislators:

### *Tips for Success...*

Even if you are not headed to Albany for the Capital Conference, sponsored by NYSSBA, you can still learn how to speak to your State Legislator and see them at the Legislative Breakfast on January 21, the Legislative Dinner on May 11, or make an appointment to meet them on your own or with other members from your own school board.

The first thing to remember is to remain professional. Sometimes our stories are emotional. The things we need to advocate for are usually things we are passionate about. But that doesn't mean you can drop professionalism at the door.

Next, our requests are best heard when there is supporting evidence. Have statistics, data, and stories ready to share.

Remember to be brief. If you speak about one to three issues in under 20 minutes, you are doing great.

Legislators are balancing so many demands and 20 minutes seems to be the magic number. If you can't complete all you need in that time frame, consider having a document you can leave with your legislator. Be sure to include your contact information so he or she can follow up with questions they may have.

I found an example of dialogue one may encounter when speaking with a legislator and some possible responses from SSFC and Dr. Rick Timbs.

**If your legislator says,** "Do you want me to create more mandates to fix this issue?" You can remind the legislator that many current mandates impact efficiency, productivity and effectiveness both educationally and financially. Carefully weigh the consequences of adding and/or eliminating mandate to avoid unintended consequences.

**If your legislator says,** "I cannot do that; I represent everyone." You can speak to your legisla-

tor about the makeup of his or her constituents and how what you propose will benefit all.

**If your legislator says,** "I have your best interests at heart." You can ask him or her to provide evidence through explaining legislation they are sponsoring and opposing that will support your district and its advocacy goals.

**If your legislator says,** "You can make data say anything." Tell the stories of things happening in your district that support your request and the data. Tell them the personal stories of students mental health and wellness. Tell them the stories of the fear students and faculty have the day after another school shooting is reported in the media. Tell them the story of the student who has special needs and stays in school beyond the typical student. Tell them the story of cuts made to programs to cover rising energy costs. Whatever your request is, have the story behind it.

**If your legislator says,** "There is nothing I can do. Long Island has a lock on the legislation." You can remind them there is always something that can be done. Where there is a will, there is a way. Ask them to ban together with other local representatives who represent all our school districts and refuse to vote in favor of a state budget that doesn't bring equity to all parts of the state.

**If your legislator says,** "Thank you, we will be in touch." Tell them you are glad to hear it. Let them know when and how you plan to follow up with their staff members. Clarify your expectations and provide your contact information.