

ADVOCACY ALLIANCE MONTHLY

YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE FROM YOUR LEGISLATIVE TEAM AND ECASB COMMUNICATIONS

Dear Members,

Advocacy activities have taken front and center since the January Newsletter. The legislative Team met on January 20, I attended the Niagara Orleans School Board Association's Legislative Breakfast and met with several legislators there. ECASB held our Rick Timbs Dessert Forum virtual due to a snowstorm, and just yesterday members of ECASB attended the virtual NYSSBA Lobby Day, where I arranged meetings with 11 legislators.

The governor released the NYS budget proposal and our legislators have been busy in legislative sessions in Albany, so the Bill Alerts just keep coming. I hope your district's legislative representative is using his or her Bill Track 50 account and sharing with you some of the bills they see that would impact your district. I have a few to mention as well, so make sure to read the Bill Alert page.

So sit back and enjoy these lingering days of winter with some ECASB reading. And Happy Valentine's Day!

Sincerely,
Jane

The NYS Legislative Session Calendar is now available!

[sessioncalendar_2022.pdf \(nyassembly.gov\)](#)

Important Dates

- ⇒ ECASB Awards Nominations close March 3.
- ⇒ Legislative Team Meeting, March 17, 6:30-8:30, B1
- ⇒ Prospective School Board, March 26, 8-10:30 a.m., B1
- ⇒ Budget Vote and School Board Elections, May 17

Important Tasks

- ⇒ Send an ECASB post card to your legislators advocating for your district's needs.
- ⇒ Send in nominations for ECASB Awards today.

NYSSBA's Fireside Chat with SED

The NYSSBA Capital Conference was 100 % virtual this year. On Wednesday, February 2, NYSSBA leaders lead panel discussions from 9 a.m. to noon for anyone able to join live. On February 4, all members of NYSSBA should have received an email with a link to the recording.

Bob Schneider, the NYSSBA executive director, made a prediction: he believes we will be in person for Lobby Day in Albany next year. I sure hope he is correct. He then led the discussion in a Fireside Chat with Commissioner of the State Education Department Dr. Betty A Rosa, and Senior Deputy Commissioner Jim Baldwin. Schneider first asked for an update from initiatives discussed with the State Education Department last year, specifically with a focus on customer service and Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiative.

Commissioner Rosa said to think about the principals behind DEI and creating landscapes and environments that support DEI. The foundation and work must be intentional. She is asking for districts to begin work wherever they are within their own communities and with their stakeholders, the implication being that not all communities need to start from square one and other communities have further to go to reach the end goal. Rosa further suggests districts focus on sharing and practice. With excellent models, we can learn from each other and work collaboratively “to create platforms for courageous and honest conversations that need to be had to make stronger schools,” Rosa said, adding that NYS could be a role model for excellence of civil discourse and debate needed “all the way to the national level.” She hopes NYS will become the model for the voice of reason needed to be able to engage in the conversations needed to get to a better place.

Addressing the customer service side of the update, Rosa and Baldwin confirmed that SED needs to be very intentional of their own work to rebuild the department to address DEI. With a P-20 focus, the infrastructure of the department and its ability to support the schools of NYS must be addressed. SED's focus is on acquiring the resources needed to support school districts. The power of DEI is in that it encourages districts to reflect on their current policies and attempt to engage communities in an adaptive process. SED will provide that support through BOCES and professional development/portals. There is a special priority on P20. SED is asking the budget to support structural changes in the department to support the P-20 perspective.

Schneider turned attention to the Budget aspects addressing the staffing issues in the education related workforce, and Rosa acknowledged it: “We all know we have a teacher shortage even prepandemic...the pandemic has added another element.” She also talked about leadership in general and the need to implement programs to

restore leadership programs. She admits recruiting and retention are important but stressed we must be engaging to those already in education, “knowing it is an incredible profession even with the pandemic stress.”

Rosa and Baldwin share the idea that we need to focus on the diversity of our teaching workforce. “We have to have individuals prepared to give children the very best and to give them the tools to be outstanding professionals,” Rosa declared. She shared that preparation is just as important as is professional development. Rosa welcomes the proposed investment from the budget, but with concerns that need to be voiced for proper collaboration for the best way to get there.

Baldwin elaborated on the structural changes at SED. One change is the creation of an office to focus on teacher leader development. These include preparation programs that will be responsive to the certification process and add to professional development for teachers and for school leaders. SED is opposed to temporary certifications, believing it leads to classroom disruption and changes in teaching assignments after a school year begins. “Too many people think they met requirements, but they don't,” says Baldwin, “so they would get the temporary cert and it would end up revoked.” He adds it would be “confusing.” He agrees the current certification process is too expensive and complex. Working to revamp the process to a more effective process that would reduce expense and complexity is needed. He believed the expired certificate, allowing those with an expired certificate to step in again, also flawed. “Our process [in NYS] is tiered. [Professionals] need to prepare for the next step in the tier,” he concludes.

Rosa shared her thoughts on the federal stimulus funds (CARES, ARP and CSSRA) and the opportunities for using them. Working as “thought partners,” we can continue to find safe ways to return to in person instruction and address the impact of loss of instructional time. We can improve the technology platforms to expand and extend to individual students. We should use the fund in areas of mental health and wellness, addressing the trauma caused by isolation and address social emotional issues created by these traumas. There needs to be a “combination of learning and addressing social emotional trauma students have faced,” Rosa asserts. From the individual child to the classroom to whole communities, everyone's voices about investment have been drown out in the past. Now it is clear we must support everyone and support partnerships with other state agencies. “We no longer work in silos,” Rosa proclaims. She adds we need to “figure out how to maximize funding and create community schools that serve children, families and communities.” We need to be innovative and to create a shared vision that engages such conversations and actions.

On foundation aid, Rosa says everyone is thrilled

NYSSBA's Fireside Chat with SED Con't.

to have full funding, but there is another “area to grapple with” and we must “address the formula itself.” She asserts we have to invest in an analysis to evaluate and find a new formula, adding, “it really will be important...to commence in that study and...look at factors that have significantly changed and how they influence how funds are allocated.” SED is promoting career and technology education and the expansion of such programs. They are also advocating to lift the salary cap from \$30,000 to \$60,000 over the next three years. This is not in the budget and SED is asking us to help advocate for this when we talk to legislators.

When asked about Governor Hochul's plan to connect all to Broadband and close the digital divide, Rosa said, “the devil's in the details.” She stressed we must look beyond just connecting; we must address infrastructure, equipment, and professional development. The pandemic highlights the need for these upgrades and the extent of the lack of equity. We must ask how we can ensure that all have access not just to the Internet but also to equipment and professional development. Usage and lack thereof in schools' surveys to pinpoint areas that need to be upgraded, including equipment and its maintenance, sustainability of programs, and parental education to support student

success.

There were additional sessions including a prerecording with Education Committee Chairperson Senator Shelly Mayer and her counterpart for the Committee on NYC education. The purpose of the conference was to learn more about Governor Hochul's Executive Budget Proposal, the impact it will have on our schools and how to express your concerns and influence legislators when it comes to NYS public education. We need to help the legislator better understand the data about education and see if it aligns with the real goals of public education. Using supporting data will also help you when you make your asks with legislators. It was recommended that we not end our advocacy efforts with Lobby Day meetings, but to reach out every Friday when legislators take time to reflect on the legislative initiatives presented during the week. Call them at their home offices and pick just one or two issues to address. Help them see what your district needs are and encourage them to vote in support of those needs. Ask them to sponsor legislation that favors your district projects and always, thank them for their time.

In the Virtual Room



Above (Top to Bottom): SED Commissioner Rosa, SED Deputy Commissioner Baldwin, NYSSBA Capital Conference Logo and NYSSBA Executive Director Bob Schneider.

Comic Corner

New from a nearby state:

State officials in Ohio are trying to pass legislation to change the name of the town, Mechanicsburg, to Engagement. When asked why, one official commented that it made clear sense because the town is halfway between Dayton and Marion. (Happy Valentine's Day!)

time to talk



A VIRTUAL EVENING WITH RICK TIMBS

Mother nature couldn't stop ECASB members from meeting with Rick Timbs. With the prediction of some nasty weather, the in-person dessert forum was flawlessly changed to a Zoom event, allowing for over 45 members and ECASB sponsors to attend the 90 minutes presentation. Available to any member who asks for them, Timbs went through a slide show outline the impact of Federal Stimulus aid and the proposed Executive Budget from Governor Hochul. At the start of the evening, Timbs commended sponsors in attendance for not just financially supporting member districts, but also for showing an interest in understanding school finances and what schools are up against. By the end of the presentation, one new member said she had maxed out on her acronyms, but commended Timbs for sharing important and valuable information.

Timbs, the executive director of Statewide School Financial Consortium (SSFC), advises that districts use federal stimulus monies to both supplement and supplant district finances, reminding all not to use them for areas that will need continued funding after these funds are exhausted. He expresses concern saying, "Once the grant is up, it may be hard to find other funding to keep all the new initiatives going with it gone." He also warns districts to use it all, as the funds are use it or lose it. He also argues not to just stuff it into reserves. He recommends having a plan that comes from an analysis of the district's financial situation.

If a district does place funds in a reserve, he urges it go into a capital reserve. It is true that it will require voter approval to use it later down the road, but the demonstration of faith in the community will go a

long way to healing and keeping faith with the community.

If a district does choose to place it into a reserve that does not need voter approval for use, it will still need a board resolution for its use and Timbs recommends using attorneys to write the resolution so that it is iron clad. Also keep in mind that even if it doesn't need voter approval, it will likely still need SED approval, even if the funding doesn't allow for building aid. There will still be SEQR requirements. The good news from Timbs is that he's heard SED say they will expedite applications.

Timbs also recommends districts take a good look at long-term plans, suggesting that long range financial plans for the next four years will truly help a district determine its financial health. And as we plan those budgets, we must anticipate the rising labor costs. Labor competition is becoming fierce and staff shortages, already threatening workforce stability, will only worsen. To find and keep quality people, districts are going to have to pay more in salaries.

Timbs then turned to advocacy. "Advocacy," he says, "is not an event. It is a process." He reminds us all that legislators are in their home office every Friday during legislative session. We need to ban together in small groups and take turns knocking on their doors and sitting down with them every Friday. Don't go alone; bring key people and influencers. Practice before you go in and limit a meeting to one or two issues. Have talking points ready and know who will say what. And when you leave, thank them for their time and tell them you will be back to check in again.

For more information on Timbs advocacy advice and his company's take on school finances,

A Visit With Our Neighbors:

At The Niagara Orleans School Board Association Legislative Breakfast

As mentioned in the Newsflash emailed on January 31st, I had the pleasure of attending the Niagara Orleans School Board Association Legislative breakfast on the morning of January 29th. In addition to about 35 members of the organization, Assembly-members Michael Norris and Angelo Morinello were in attendance, as was Alex Quinn, a representative of Senator Robert Ort. Attending remotely via zoom was a representative of Assemblymember Stephen Hawley.

The event Master of Ceremonies was NOSBA President Leslie Tobin, a Board of Education member from Lockport City School District. Three local superintendents presented the Legislative Priorities : Niagara Falls City Superintendent Mark Laurie, Lewiston-Porter CSD Superintendent Paul Casseri, and Niagara Wheatfield CSD Superintendent Daniel Ljiljanich. Their message mirrors ESCASB priorities which include mental health needs, access to technology, and the digital divide. Laurie maintained that in Niagara Orleans, the superintendents remain united even as they have their disagreements. He then addressed masking mandates declaring that it is “time to move on from the mask mandates...time to trust those locally to decide what is best in our own schools.” The idea of returning decisions to local control became a secondary theme to the morning, as it was stated again when the discussions turned to APPR, staffing issues, and special education funding needs. Laurie asked legislators to “think locally when doing things statewide.” He asked for legislators to help “Let school boards do the right thing for their community.”

Too many students still do not have equal and adequate access to technology, and this hinders their education.

The presentation turned to the pathways to graduation. Many students struggle to meet the expectations and standards set forth without consideration to valuable, quality programs now offered that were not in existence when the current graduation standards were created.

You cannot talk about education funding without talking about special education

costs.

The governor's budget may fully fund education, but it doesn't address the exponential growth of special education costs. A reserve fund dedicated to special education costs is absolutely necessary to help schools save for rainy-day special education needs, said Casseri.

Ljiljanich began his part in the presentation thanking all the Board of Education members for their service. He then continued to the broadband access conversation adding that ways of connecting beyond broadband are needed. He says, “The access isn't needed for entertainment, for TV. It is for education purposes.”

There were mentions of the needs of the Tuscarora Indian Nation students. Not only do they lack access, they lack basic building maintenance. The state owns and is responsible for the school building built on land owned by the Tuscarora Nation. For the past 7 years, the school district has paid millions of dollars in repairs and is still waiting on reimbursements. This isn't really a surprise, as lack of timely reimbursements has become common place in New York State.

The state review and reimbursement process is slow. There are only two reviewers. As people have retired or left for other positions, the State Education Department has failed to replace them. In fact, the Smart Schools Committee hasn't even met to review requests for funding and reimbursements in almost a year.

Districts cannot wait for the review process to keep up with the growing technology needs, so they are forced to go elsewhere instead of being able to use the money that was promised years ago.

The money is supposedly there; it just isn't being given out. Work has been done and the state is supposed to reimburse districts in 60 days, but 10 months later, districts are still waiting. What's worse, some districts are experiencing cash flow issues as a result and are having to go out to borrow money for payroll, and will eventually pay more than the reimbursement.

School safety was raised, holding primary and general elections in school buildings. Districts are having to use election days as superintendent conference days to avoid issues with the public entering the building during the school day while children present.

Casseri praised the state for the full funding

of NYS public school education. But without fixing the 15 year old formula, too many districts are still not getting the money they need and deserve. The greatest aid needs to get to the neediest districts.

A stronger updated formula would help create great predictability for those districts that need it most. Casseri asserted, “We need transparency, accountability and full reimbursements for expense-based aid.” The new governor is doing better than her predecessor and that is greatly appreciated. But don’t stop with full funding. Fix the formula. The NYS economy, and WNY in particular, has changed dramatically. Over a million people have left NYS, and they are the wealthier tax payers. Those left behind can not fill the void created.

Fifteen years ago, there was no tax cap to further tie the hands of school budgets. Often schools find the budget in conflict with the tax cap and end up with a negative number. The rate of inflation outpacing the district revenue isn’t helping. Many schools cannot sustain operations, health care and teacher contracts with a cap that doesn’t match inflation rates. Casseri stressed, “we aren’t complaining. We just want you to know the struggles schools are facing.”

Casseri then offered a couple solutions. First, increase the fund balances, currently at 4 %. (Here in the ECASB office, we noticed Governor Hochul mentioned the state putting away 15% for rainy days. She sited experts in finance saying this was the number to reach. Why can’t school districts have the same latitude?)

The second suggestion was to increase reserve fund flexibility. Casseri reminds us, “Issues kids are facing are not going to just stop two years from now...” when the state and federal funding ends. We need to be prepared for this eventuality.

Assemblymember Morinello said, “We know what is happening. We see what is happening. And we also know what’s happening with education and the challenges. It’s not so much just the three R’s anymore, but its all the aspects that you deal with on a daily basis, the poverty issues, the nurtition issues, the mental health issues. But what I’m proud of is in this room there may be differences of opinion but you all work together to make it work.” He demonstrated he understands the problems when he declared, “...cooperation and communication can be utilized to foster some of the issues because we’re going to have a sustainability issue next year, the year after when the federal funds stop...Let’s be very cautious about what we see this year. Mike Norris, myself, Steve Hawley, Senator Ortt, we will fight to the death to fund our schools. We will fight to the death to give you what you need.”

Assembly Member Michael Norris said he is proud he is to be a product of public education, having graduated from Lockport. “It’s important that we fight each and every day for the education system and providing for the future.”

There is a change in the culture in Albany, Norris explains; “I can tell you the governor and I disagree on many policy issues. However, since the new governor has taken office in August, there’s been a change of culture in Albany. And I think a lot of that has to do with her background. When we contact the governor’s office now, we are getting responses on a more regular basis. The communication is better. The executive budget in terms of education is much better. She’s not using the foundation aid as a negotiating tool. To her credit, her executive budget focused on key issues. I think her Western New York roots are shining through.”

Represented
Legislators:



Above: Assemblymember Angelo Morinello, Senator Robert Ortt, Assemblymembers Stephen Hawley, and Assemblymember Michael Norris.

LOBBY DAY:

A Day of Advocacy

ECASB participated in the New York State School Board Association's (NYSSBA) Virtual Lobby Day Wednesday, February 9th by holding 30-minute meetings with 11 different legislators and their staff members. Attending from ECASB were: In attendance will be the following ECASB members: **Erik Polkowski** (*Akron CSD*), **Ed Schaefer** (*Cheektowaga CSD*), **Michael Montoro** (*Cleveland Hill UFSD*), **David Lowrey** (ECASB Executive Director and *Erie 2 CC BOCES Board Member*), **Jane Sullivan** (ECASB Program Services Manager and *Iroquois CSD*), **Davis Podkulski** (*Frontier CSD*), **Heather Jacobs** (*Iroquois CSD*), **Lesley Battaglia** (*Kenmore Tonawanda CSD*), **Kathleen Chiavetta** (*Lake Shore CSD* and ECASB Legislative Team Co-Chair), **Michael Franey** (*Lake Shore CSD*), **Michelle DeCarlo** (*North Collins CSD*), **Scott Johnson** (*Sweet Home CSD* and ECASB Legislative Team Co-Chair), **Kirstin Schmutzler** (*Tonawanda City SD*), **Janice Dalbo** (*West Seneca CSD*), **Teresa Leatherbarrow** (*Williamsville CSD*), and **Dr. Susan McClary** (*Williamsville CSD*).

Small group meetings such as these are so important to our organization and its member districts and our legislators and their staff members. It is through these dialogues that we *all* have a better understanding of how changes in legislation impact our NYS public schools.

Sessions were held with *Assemblyman William Conrad (District 140)*, *Assemblyman Jonathan Rivera (District 149)*, *Assemblyman Michael Norris (District 144)*, *Assemblyman Burke's (District 142) Director of Communications Matt Dearing*, *Assemblywoman and Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes' (District 141)*, *Senior Advisor Leah Halton-Pope* and *Legislative Director Paul Nickson*, *Assemblywoman Monica Wallace's (District 143)*, *Director of*

Community Affairs Elizabeth Brinkworth, *Senator Sean Ryan (District 60)* with his staff member *Alexandra Grose*, *Senator Edward Rath III's (District 61)*, *Legislative Director Nick Haas*, *Senator Patrick Gallivan (District 59)* with his staff member *Niko Ladopoulos*, *Senator Tim Kennedy's (District 63)* *Senior Advisor Robert Davidson* and *Director of Operations Emily Reed*, and *Assemblywoman Karen McMahon's (District 146)*, *Chief of Staff Jim Arnone*.

In conversations led by the Legislative Team Co-chairs, we spoke about the foundation aid formula and asked that new metrics replace old ones, specifically citing the use of free and reduce breakfast and lunch recipients- as parents no longer file because all students are now receiving free breakfast and lunch and using newer census data instead of data from the 2000 census. We spoke about teacher shortages and made suggestions about updates to the current costly and complex process to gain certification in NYS. We spoke about Senator Rath's bill (S5407- see Bill Alerts) to help create less costly paths to gain more rural schoolteachers. We spoke about Charter schools and mechanisms to help reimbursements return to schools faster. We spoke about raising the aid-able cap of BOCES teacher salaries from \$30,000, set in 1992, to \$60,000. We spoke about mental health of students, both in providing services and asking for flexibility in funds given to help student mental health. And we spoke about helping districts navigate the unintended costly effects of the Child's Victim Act. *Assemblyman Conrad* shared with us that, because of the debate at the ECASB Legislative Breakfast, he has help write and is co-sponsoring bill A09138 (see Bill Alerts).

Legislators were open to hearing our viewpoints and in most cases, they agreed that our asks were reasonable and necessary. *Assemblywoman Peoples-Stokes'* staff member Ms. Halton-Pope shared her concerns about ensuring that when looking to increase the number of teachers and staff in

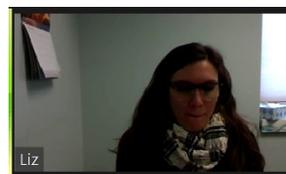
LOBBY DAY: Continued

schools to reduce shortages, that the initiative should also take a look at diversity in the schools. “We want students to see teachers who look like them.”

Also in that same session, when talking about Charter Schools, we learned the *Assemblywoman Peoples-Stokes* likes that a parent has school choice and she does not oppose the idea of Charter schools; however, she does think that there should be separate funding mechanisms for them. Halton-Pope cautioned us that as they have begun to look at this issue, they have realized it is a much more complex issue. She suggested that we be watching for any changes that may be proposed in the future.

Virtual Zoom Screenshots during Lobby Day. Right. Row 1: Matt Dearing (Assemblyman Patrick Burke’s office) and Assemblyman Michael Norris. Row 2: Senator Sean Ryan and Assemblyman William Conrad. Row 3: Leah Halton-Pope (Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes office) and Paul Nickson (Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes office). Row 4: Nick Haas (Senator Edward Rath III’s office) and Robert Davidson and Emily Reed (Senator Tim Kennedy’s office). Row 5: Assemblyman Jonathan Rivera and Jim Arnoe (Assemblywoman Karen McMahon’s office). Row 6: Alexandra Grose (Senator Patrick Gallivan’s office) and Senator Patrick Gallivan. Row 7: Elizabeth Brinkworth (Assemblywoman Monica Wallace’s office) and some members of the ECASB Lobby Team during the session with Senator Gallivan.

...A Virtual Event



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@elb.org; she will set you up with an account umbrellaed under the ECASB Bill Track 50 subscription and send you a link to the online training recording made during the November 2021 legislative team training session.

Bill A09138– This bill establishes the child victims act fund which provides grant awards in reimbursement to public school districts located within the state who have been named as defendants in certain child sexual abuse legal cases and in which it can be demonstrated by the public school district that no insurance policy for the covered period can be located after a good-faith effort to do so has been made, there was a monetary judgment issued or settlement agreement with regard to such action and where it can be demonstrated by the public school district that payment in full of such judgment or settlement would put a substantial burden on the district's ability to execute its mission and negatively impact its existing student population. It was referred to the Ways and Means Committee on Jan. 31. It is sponsored by Jennifer Lunsford (D), **William Conrad (D)**, Sandy Galef (D), and Pam Hunter (D). Read the full bill by visiting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/A9138>.

Bill S05407– This bill would amend the education law, in relation to enacting the New York state rural teaching incentive program. It was referred to the Higher Education Committee on Jan. 5. The sponsor is **Edward Rath (R)**. Read the full bill by visiting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S5407>.

Bill A09229-This bill would amend the education law, in relation to increasing the amount of the salary paid to any career and technical education teacher, supervisor or other employee of a program of the board of cooperative educational services that is considered to be an approved expense for purposes of state allocation. It was referred to the Education Committee on Feb. 9. It is sponsored by **David DiPietro (R)**. Read the full bill by visiting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/A9229>.

Bill A02514-This bill would amend the education law, in relation to increasing foundation aid to school districts located in a high wealth ratio county that meet five variables impacting academic success: **free or reduced lunch**, English language learners, wealth ratio, enrollment, and special education. It was referred to the Education Committee on Jan. 5. It is sponsored by Nader Sayegh (D), Phara Forrest (D), and Sandy Galef (D), with no local sponsors. Read the full bill by visiting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/A2514>.

ACTION TIME:

Our legislators tell us all the time that they work closely together. Let's put our pen to paper and ask them to support each other in the bills that favor our position, and to work together to block the bills that go against our needs. Also, use the ECASB Thank You Post Cards to thank them for the time they spent with ESCAB members on Feb. 9.

Meet the New York State Senate Committee on Education Members



Each month, ECASB highlights a member from the New York State Senate Committee on Education. This month ECASB introduces you to the Honorable Robert Jackson

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Robert Jackson serves on the Education Committee and is the Chair of Civil Service and Pensions Committee.

Senator Jackson grew up in Northern Manhattan with 8 siblings. He went to school at PS 186, but he never dreamed that one day he would be a New York State Senator. He credits the “hard work, perseverance, and the help of good people in the community” for his success. Senator Jackson fights so hard to “knock down barriers and to make sure every child receives the best education possible,” because he had good examples of this during his education.

He started his political career as a Community School Board President. His webpage touts that in his tenure “he filed a lawsuit against New York State to fix an inequitable school funding distribution formula that was cheating schools and undermining our children’s future. He walked 150 miles to Albany to bring attention to the lawsuit and won a court judgment that awarded \$16 billion for NYC schools. As a result of this landmark decision and “for being a staunch advocate for generations of New York City children, for never giving up on the belief that education is a basic civil right, and for giving millions of city students a fighting chance,” NY1 honored Robert as ‘New Yorker of the Year.’”

Born and raised in Manhattan, Robert and his family have lived in Washington Heights since 1975. He attended New York City public schools and graduated from State University of New York at New Paltz. He is married and a dedicated father of three daughters.

Read his full bio on his webpage by visiting [About Robert Jackson | NY State Senate \(nysenate.gov\)](#).



Meet the New York State Assembly Committee on Education Members



Each month, ECASB highlights one member from the New York State Assembly Committee on Education. This month we introduce Assembly Member, the Honorable Rebecca A. Seawright.

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MEMBER**

ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 76

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Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright represents the Upper East Side, Yorkville, and Roosevelt Island in New York’s 76th Assembly District. She is the first woman to serve the district and since her election in 2014. Appointed by the Speaker in 2021, she holds the Leadership position of Chair of the Majority Steering Committee.

Her webpage says: “In the Assembly Education Committee, she champions our public schools and helped obtain more than \$1 billion in new state support.” Additionally, “she is championing the Teach LGBT curriculum bill to ensure that NYS Education Department develops curriculum on the historical treatment of and contributions by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in America.”

Her webpage also states “she is known as a strong voice for over 133,000 constituents, securing over \$15 million in funding for public schools, senior centers, parks, and non-profits.

Seawright is the recipient of The Met's 13th Annual Women's Award '20; Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney Fearless Girl Award '19; A Place to Be(ad) Me Honoree '19; Super Happy Healthy Kids Black Tie Gala Honoree '19; James Dudley Luce Foundation Humanitarian of the Year '19; Lenox Hill Neighborhood House Elizabeth Rohatyn Award '17; and The New York Board of Rabbis Humanitarian of the Year '15.

Read more about Assemblywoman Seawright by visiting her webpage at [Rebecca A. Seawright - Assembly District 76 | Assembly Member Directory | New York State Assembly \(nyassembly.gov\)](https://www.nyassembly.gov/members/assembly-member-directory/assemblywoman-rebecca-a-seawright).



BILL TRACK

★ 50 ★

