



LOWER HUDSON EDUCATION COALITION

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MEMO IN SUPPORT **S.5287 (Carlucci)/A.4743 (Galef)**

Relates to school districts as polling places

The Lower Hudson Education Coalition (LHEC) supports the aforementioned legislation which would authorize school districts to decline designation of their district buildings as polling places. Additionally, this bill would authorize school districts to move their district elections out of school buildings to other publicly accessible buildings within school district boundaries.

School buildings should represent a safe haven for our students so they can grow and learn. Too often in recent years we have seen the security of school buildings threatened or compromised. There has been growing concern regarding school buildings being used as polling locations for elections. When schools are used as polling locations, they are open to the public and school districts are unable to monitor who has access to their facilities. These concerns have led to some school districts wishing to be exempted from having their facilities used as polling locations.

Current election law allows for public buildings, except for school district buildings, to file a written request for cancellation as a polling location. Yet school districts do not have any recourse when they are designated a polling location, they must provide space. This legislation seeks to change this inequity.

Allowing school districts, the ability to decline their designation as a polling location is needed now more than ever due to recent changes in state law that have consolidated the state and federal primary days to June. This is particularly problematic as the June primary in 2020 is scheduled during a Regents exam week when school districts need all testing locations available, not being used as polling locations.

The proposed legislation provides school districts the ability to put the needs of students first and their instructional time, not the needs of local board of elections and their own school district elections. This is especially true with upcoming early voting requirements, as well as the fact that elections take place throughout the year beyond General Election Day. Primary and Special Elections take place throughout the year.

For all these reasons and more, LHEC strongly supports S.5287 (Carlucci)/A.4743 (Galef) and urges its immediate enactment.

Established in 1976, the LHEC is a joint project of the Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents, Dutchess County School Boards Association, Rockland County School Boards Association and Westchester Putnam School Boards Association. Our mission is to serve as a regional leadership hub in public education advocacy.