



May 12th, 2025

Senate Majority Leader Andrea
Stewart-Cousins
188 State Street LOB 907
Albany, NY 12247

Senator Shelly Mayer,
188 State Street LOB Room 509
Albany, NY 12247

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie
188 State Street LOB 932
Albany, NY 12248

Assemblymember Michael Benedetto,
188 State Street LOB 836
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Senate and Assembly Leaders,

We, the undersigned, write in support of the Solutions Not Suspensions Act S.134 (Jackson)/A.118 (Solages) as a critical piece of legislation that will reduce the New York school system's over-reliance on exclusionary discipline while promoting a safer, more supportive school climate. **New York State must pass Solutions Not Suspension this session!**

THE PROBLEM

Schools should be places where students are included, respected, and supported. In New York – where students lose hundreds of thousands of classroom days each year because of suspensions, often for normal youthful behavior – this is not the reality. Across New York State, even children in pre-kindergarten and childcare lose out on instruction each year because of suspensions. These punishments disproportionately impact Black and Latinx students, students from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, and those with disabilities.¹

Students who miss 20 days or more in a single year have a dramatically reduced graduation rate.² In a state where suspensions can last up to an entire school year, students are imperiled by suspensions.

Across New York during the 2023-2024 school year, **137,511** students were suspended at least once – including **8,331** children in grades Pre-K to 3. This equates to **957,934** school days lost to suspension. This loss of learning impacts marginalized students at disproportionate rates. Black and Latinx students were up to **5x** more likely to be suspended than white students. Students with disabilities were up to **5x** more likely to be suspended than their peers. Additionally, **economically disadvantaged students were up to 4.5x more likely to be suspended than their peers.**³

¹ Safe Schools Task Force Report: Recommendations for Reducing Disparities in and Reforming School Discipline in New York State. December 2022

² David Silver, Marisa Saunders, and Estela Zarate, What Factors Predict High School Graduation in the Los Angeles Unified School District: California Dropout Research Project Report #14 (UCLA/IDEA and UC/ACCORD, 2008), United States Department of Education (2025), "Chronic Absenteeism". <https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/supporting-students/chronic-absenteeism>

³ Source: The Children's Agenda policy analysis, 2022

Research shows that suspensions and expulsions:

- Decrease families' and students' trust in their school by 47% and a decrease in identification with school of 54%. As a result, young students may form a negative association with school rather than a lifelong love of learning.⁴
- Deprive young children of the benefits of participation in early childhood education which correlates with reductions in special education placement, being less likely to repeat a grade, and increases in high school graduation rates.⁵
- Are associated with lower math and reading scores for each additional day of suspension, meaning longer suspensions are more harmful.⁶
- Do not positively change or improve a child's behavior.
- More often are used on boys, children of color, and children with disabilities.⁷
- Increase children's risk of failing at school, not graduating, and going to jail or prison.⁸

THE SOLUTION

New York must end its reliance on suspensions as the default way to discipline students. Instead, children should be held accountable through developmentally-appropriate, restorative, and trauma-informed interventions that help children learn from their mistakes, foster more positive relationships with their teachers and peers, and continue their academic development.

S.134/A.118 would require school codes of conduct to include restorative approaches to discipline and proactively foster a positive school climate. It would limit the use of suspensions in pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade to only the most serious behaviors.⁹ The maximum length of suspensions would be shortened from 180 to 20 school days (except when required by federal law). Suspensions for minor infractions are often subject to implicit bias such as tardiness, dress code violations, or insubordination would be prohibited. The Bill would require students who are suspended to receive academic instruction and the opportunity to complete assignments, take exams, and earn credit. This legislation also requires charter schools to follow state education law on student behavior and discipline.

Nationally, New York State has fallen behind other states in limiting suspensions.¹⁰ Twenty-four states have already passed laws to place some type of limit on the number of days a student may be suspended from a high of 90 days to a low of 3 days. Twenty-one states have limited suspensions of 25 days or fewer. Furthermore, New York does not put any limitations on suspensions based on grade level or the age of the student.

⁴ Pyne, J. (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040718816684> McCoy et al. (2017).

⁵ McCoy et al. (2017). <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X17737739>

⁶ Lacoce, J., & Steinberg, M. P. (2019). <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373718794897>

⁷ US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2019).

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/school-climate-and-safety.pdf>

⁸ Monahan, K.C., VanDerhei, S., Bechtold, J. & Cauffman, E. (2014) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-014-0103-1>

⁹ For example, the Gun Free Schools Act, <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2020/07/Guidance.Gun-Free-Schools-Act.pdf>

¹⁰ Based on a summary of state laws created using information collected by The Children's Equity Project at Arizona State University (2023) and cross referenced with the Discipline Compendium from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (2023) as well as the Education Commission of the States (2021)

**THE ASK:
Pass the Bill**

S.134/A.118 fundamentally asks New York state to rethink the purpose of suspensions in school environments. The function of schools is to educate the next generation, providing them with the academic, social, and life skills necessary to be successful adults. Suspensions and removals interrupt that process, causing demonstrated harm that currently replicates the inequities present throughout this country. This legislation seeks to significantly reduce that harm, creating a more inclusive and nurturing school environment for every child, adolescent and young adult in the state.

Eliminating suspensions for minor infractions will curb the over-criminalization of normal youthful behaviors. New York State education law and punishment practices contribute to a punitive culture that has hindered the educational experiences of generations of young people – many of whom have disproportionately been Black and Latinx. Research and the personal experiences of our members convey that suspensions play an integral role in the school-to-prison pipeline. New York State needs to reduce the harm caused by suspensions and classroom removals by passing this bill.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Children of New York
Alcohol & Drug Awareness Council
Alliance for Quality Education
Aspire Hope NY
Astor Services
BestSelf Behavioral Health
Blessings In Transformation
Brooklyn Defender Services
Brooklyn Perinatal Network, Inc,
CASA-NYC
Center for Family Representation
Children's Aid
Children's Defense Fund-New York
Children's Home of Wyoming Conference
Citizen Action of New York
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)
Compeer Rochester
CoNECT and Community Health Worker Network of Buffalo
COVENANT LIFE KINGDOM EMBASSY
Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY
Empire State Campaign for Child Care

Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition
Families Together in New York State
Family of Woodstock Inc.
Family Resource Network
Family Ties of Westchester, Inc.
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA)
Forestdale, Inc.
Freedom Agenda
Friends of Recovery- New York
Geel Community Services, Inc.
Girls for Gender Equity
Girls Inc. of Westchester County
Good Shepherd Services
Hey There Beautiful Foundation
Hillside
HOPE585
INDEPENDENT LIVING, INC.
JCCA
JMACforFamilies
Justice for Families
Karlana Hamblin
King's Kids LLC
Kings Against Violence Initiative (KAVI)
Lawyers For Children
Legal Action Center

Liberated Success, Inc.
Long Island Families Together, Inc.
Long Island Social Justice Action Network
Milestones With Love
Multi Assistance Resource Centers
National Alliance on Mental Illness New York State
Narrowing the Front Door to NYC's Child Welfare System Workgroup
National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse
Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem
New Hour for Women & Children — LI
New Tomorrow
New York Alliance for Developmental Disabilities
New York Civil Liberties Union
New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services
New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
New York State Defenders Association
New York State Psychiatric Association
New York State Psychological Association
New Yorkers For Children
Northern Regional Center for Independent Living, Inc.
NYS Coalition for Children's Behavioral Health
Parent Legislative Action Network (PLAN)
Parents Supporting Parents NY
Partners for Dignity & Rights
Poppy Muse Inc.
PowHer New York
Purelegacee, Inc
Radical Arts Project
Redlich Horwitz Foundation
Rise Magazine
RiseWell Community Services
ROC The Future Alliance
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

Student Advocacy, Inc.
Table Of Kingz Inc.
The Alliance for Rights and Recovery
The Bronx Defenders
The Brotherhood Sister Sol
The Center for Fair Futures
The Children's Agenda
The Children's Village and Harlem Dowling
The Circle Keepers
The Interfaith Alliance of Rochester
The Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc.
The Legal Aid Society
The Resolution Center, Inc.
Trinity Church
Ulster County Children's Advocacy Network
We are Revolutionary
We The Parents of WNY
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Westchester Children's Association
Western New York Law Center
Youth Represent
Youth Shelter Program of Westchester Zone 126