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Over 100 Organizations Endorse Solutions Not Suspensions Act *200 People Rally at the Capital with Legislative Sponsors*

ALBANY, May 13th, 2025 – Over 100 organizations endorsed the Solutions Not Suspensions Act in a letter that was sent to Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Carl Heastie on Monday, urging the passage of the bill this legislative session.

[View the complete sign on letter and signatories here.](#)

On Tuesday, nearly 200 parents, students, and advocates from across New York state joined the bill's sponsors, Senator Robert Jackson and Assemblymember Michaelle C. Solages, to rally for the Solutions Not Suspensions bill's immediate passage, making clear that inaction negatively impacts our children's well being and delays the creation of safe and supportive school climates.

Removing students from school as a form of punishment (suspension and expulsion) is known to be ineffective in changing behavior, harmful to students academically and socially, and used in biased ways that target students of color, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families. Despite consensus on these problems, New York State lawmakers have not passed limits on suspensions like dozens of other states. A bill that would create common sense limits on suspensions, known as the Solutions Not Suspensions Act (S.134 / A.118), has sat in the New York State Legislature for nine years without ever coming close to being made law.

Numbers to Know:

- 137,511 students were suspended at least once in New York state during the 2023-2024 school year;
- Nearly a million days (957,934) of instruction were lost to suspensions and expulsions;
- 169 Pre-K students and 1,641 Kindergarteners were suspended at least once;

What the Solution Not Suspensions Bill Does:

- Changes New York State law to only allow suspensions for the most serious behavior in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 3;
- Shortens the maximum length of suspension from 180 (a full academic year) to 20 school days (except when required by federal law);
- Requires school codes of conduct to include restorative approaches to discipline, to proactively foster a school community based on cooperation, communication, trust, and respect;

- Ensures that any punitive discipline is developmentally appropriate, implemented gradually, and proportionate to the behavior;
- Requires that students who are suspended receive academic instruction and the opportunity to earn credit, complete assignments, and take exams;
- Requires charter schools to follow state education law on student behavior and school discipline, to ensure all publicly funded schools are adopting practices that are best for child development and reduce disparities.

Quotes from our supporters:

"Our children demand justice and fair opportunities; it is our duty to provide them with an education that uplifts, not one that suppresses," said **Senator Robert Jackson**. "Supporting the Judith Kaye School Solutions Not Suspensions Act means advocating for a new era where every student—regardless of color, ability, or identity—thrives under the principles of equity and restorative justice to reach their full potential. Now is the moment to move forward, to turn our resolve into action for the betterment of all our schools."

"Schools should be a place where every child feels safe, supported, and empowered to learn alongside their peers. Yet, too often, outdated and inequitable discipline policies push students out of the classroom and into a cycle of exclusion," said **Assemblymember and BHPA Caucus Leader Michaele C. Solages**. "Unjust suspensions don't just disrupt education; they send a harmful message that some students don't belong. Children of color, students with disabilities, and those experiencing mental health challenges are especially vulnerable, often denied the support they need to thrive. Instead of punitive measures that alienate children, we must invest in solutions that address the root causes of conflict and create learning environments where all students can grow, succeed, and reach their full potential."

NY State Senator John Liu stated, "As every student who's ever missed a day of school knows, even a single missed day can be isolating, as students fall behind and struggle to catch up. For suspended students, the path to recovery is often even longer, leaving them disconnected from both the curriculum and their peers upon returning to class. It's time to end these ham-fisted disciplinary practices that disproportionately target students of color and continually isolate and exclude students in need, instead of investing in their future and providing them with support so that they can stay connected to their education and their school."

"Schools should be supportive environments that foster intellectual, social, and emotional growth. Suspensions contradict this by disconnecting students, causing harm, and fueling the school-to-prison pipeline without improving behavior or safety." said **Melinda Andra, Attorney-In-Charge of the Educational Advocacy Project with the Juvenile Rights Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. "The Solutions Not Suspensions Act aims to reduce reliance on exclusionary discipline, instead promoting interventions that hold students accountable while keeping them engaged in learning. These measures are essential to dismantling the pipeline and ensuring all students receive the support they need. Albany lawmakers must enact this measure without delay this session."

"Scripture tells us every child should be respected, yet school discipline in our city often treats students as potential threats," said **Natasha Lifton, managing Director, External Affairs at Trinity Church**. "We know too well the negative educational impacts that come from overapplying suspension as a

punishment. Trinity Church is proud to support the Solutions Not Suspensions Act, which will ensure our schools embrace non punitive approaches that prioritize a student's emotional well-being and academic success."

Lukee Forbes, Executive Director, We Are Revolutionary, said: "We can't keep confusing discipline with justice. When schools rely on exclusion instead of support, they abandon their most vulnerable students and accelerate their path toward incarceration. Every suspension is a missed opportunity to heal, to teach, to understand. Education should be the first place a young person learns their power, not the first place they're punished for their pain."

"Our children are being removed from classrooms before they're even given a chance to be heard. When a student is suspended, they lose access not only to academics, but to connection and care, things essential to learning. It's not just unfair; it's dangerous. We're watching young people be pushed out, not because they can't learn, but because the system refuses to teach with compassion. We owe them more than a desk, we owe them dignity," said **Niesreen Mende, Director of Organizing, We Are Revolutionary**.

"New York must take a stand to protect every student's right to learn," said **Stevie Vargas, Director of Campaigns & Organizing with The Children's Agenda**. "The overuse of suspensions does not create safer schools—it pushes vulnerable students further from the education and support they need to succeed. Exclusionary discipline disproportionately harms students of color, those with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged youth, reinforcing cycles of inequality. We cannot allow harmful, exclusionary practices to continue while young people's futures are on the line. The legislature must act now to pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act and ensure that schools prioritize restorative practices, accountability through growth, and equal opportunities for all students."

"We believe every child deserves a fair chance to succeed, not a path to the school-to-prison pipeline. Harsh disciplinary policies disproportionately impact students of color and those from vulnerable communities, reinforcing cycles of inequity. By advocating for restorative justice practices that keep students in school, supported, and on track for a brighter future we can create learning environments where discipline is not about exclusion, but about growth, accountability, and opportunity," said **William Weisberg, Executive Director of Forestdale, Inc.**

"Exclusionary Discipline disproportionately hurts Black students, Latino Students, and Students with Disabilities. The time to protect our students is now. When a young person makes a bad choice, it is an opportunity to teach them another path, not expel them. We cannot continue to throw away our future and these students are our future. With the vitriolic rhetoric regarding who belongs in this country and who doesn't, New York State can and should take a stand to ensure our students, all of our students, know they belong in our schools. Passing Solutions not Suspensions will send that message bright and clear," said **Crystal Baker-Burr, Director of the Education Defense Project at The Bronx Defenders**.

"The Solutions Not Suspensions Act is a necessary step toward a better funded, racially just education system that nurtures students instead of pushing them out. As Bettina Love so powerfully teaches us, 'To love all children, we must struggle together to create the schools we are taught to believe are impossible: Schools built on justice, love, joy, and anti-racism.' Suspensions don't make schools safer - they remove kids from their classrooms and steer them toward the school-to-prison pipeline. NYS must ensure that education remains the pathway to opportunity. Liberation begins when we embrace schools

that support every child, not policies that limit their opportunities to a bright future,” said **Zakiyah Shaakir-Ansari, Co-Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Education.**

“Every child deserves a supportive school environment, and forcing children out of the classroom is exactly the opposite,” said **Juan Miguel, Education Policy Center Senior Program Associate at the New York Civil Liberties Union.** “New York’s over-reliance on suspension creates distrust in the classroom, stunts learning, and hurts students — especially children of color, children with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged children. The legislature must take action to ensure every student can safely learn, grow, and succeed at school. The Solutions Not Suspensions Act must pass this session.”

“New York’s school system has long relied on suspensions, targeting vulnerable students and reinforcing a cycle of exclusion that disproportionately harms Black, Brown, and students with disabilities. These outdated methods do nothing to address the root causes of misbehavior; instead, they deny students their right to an education and their chance to succeed. Passing the Solutions Not Suspensions bill would be a crucial step toward breaking this cycle by replacing harmful, exclusionary methods with restorative approaches that hold students accountable while supporting their growth. We need schools that recognize the potential in every student and create opportunities for growth, healing, and restoration, not just punishment. This isn’t simply a policy shift; it’s a call for a fundamental change in how we educate and empower our children,” said **Angel Gray, Program & Policy Manager, Westchester Children’s Association**

“Eliminating suspensions for minor infractions will help curb the over-criminalization of normal youthful behaviors,” said **Dr. Marsha Jean-Charles, Director of Organizing at The Brotherhood Sister Sol.** “New York State education law and punishment culture has hindered the educational experiences of generations of young people – many of whom have disproportionately been Black and Brown. Research and the personal experiences of our members convey that suspensions play an integral role in the school-to-prison pipeline. New York State must reduce the harm caused by suspensions and classroom removals in all public schools and – instead – emphasize restorative practices, reduce the maximum length of suspensions to 20 days, rewrite the discipline code, and end suspensions for grades K-2. Only by doing this will we significantly reduce both the number of suspensions issued and days lost to suspension. This is the right choice!”

"Suspensions are counterproductive to any effort to provide effective, restorative solutions for young people in need," said **Neillah Cassandra Petitfrere, Policy Fellow at Girls for Gender Equity.** "Restorative Justice is not passive—it empowers young people to identify the root causes of their behavior, take accountability, and grow. Passing Solutions not Suspensions and investing money into the professional development of school staff to support a restorative justice approach ensures that our schools prioritize understanding, growth, and connection over punitive measures that isolate and harm students, particularly Black girls and youth of color. This legislation is a necessary step toward fostering inclusive environments where all students can thrive.”

"New York students and their families are experiencing a deep mental health crisis and in so many ways, the frontline of this crisis is our schools. We know that disconnection from school and community is a key risk factor for negative outcomes such as justice involvement, substance use and even suicide. New York's over-reliance on exclusionary disciplinary practices like suspensions are deeply inequitable and represent missed opportunities to lean-in to the needs that young people are communicating through behavior. Our school systems must shift our understanding of conflict and misbehavior as opportunities

for learning and growth. That's why passing the Solutions Not Suspensions is a moral imperative," said **Brad Hansen, Families Together in New York State.**

"For too long, New York students have been subjected to punitive punishments that impede their ability to learn, grow, and explore their interests. Suspensions are racist, classist, sexist, and are shown to not improve behavior. This bill limits the use of suspensions and promotes alternatives that maintain classroom participation while holding students accountable. We urge the state legislature to support this bill, as New York students deserve better," said **Caitlyn Passaretti, Senior Policy and Advocacy Associate, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**

"In New York's public school system, suspension is often the primary response to students facing disciplinary issues. However, this approach fails to address the underlying causes of the student's behaviors and pushes them further from the support they need. Furthermore, school suspension disproportionately affects minority students and those with special needs, contributing to deeper inequities. Changes in this system will go a long way to address this issue so that our youth can receive more restorative, supportive alternatives that help them grow and succeed before transitioning into society," Long Island Advocacy Center (LIAC)

"The Solutions Not Suspensions Act is vital legislation to ensure every child receives a quality education and is academically equipped for the future. School attendance is essential for students as it provides both social and academic learning experiences. When students are suspended without just cause, it conveys a detrimental message that they aren't worth the time and effort required for their education. Suspensions fail to provide education or discipline; instead, they are a punitive measure that should not be part of the school environment. Suspensions and expulsions often mark the trajectory from school to prison. KAVI advocates for this legislation as it represents a move towards effectively educating students and preparing them for adult life," said **Ramik Williams, Co-Executive Director of Kings Against Violence Initiative (KAVI).**

"Schools should be safe and supportive environments that give young people the opportunity to learn and grow, but harsh disciplinary practices are holding students back," said **Anna Arkin-Gallagher, Associate Director of Brooklyn Defenders' Civil Justice Practice.** "Exclusionary discipline leads to countless harmful educational and social outcomes, contributing to higher drop-out rates and increased contact with the criminal legal system, with vastly disparate impacts on Black students and students with disabilities. We urge lawmakers to pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act to increase restorative practices in schools and reduce suspensions."

About The Solutions Not Suspension New York Coalition:

The Solutions Not Suspensions NY Coalition is a group of organizers, direct service providers, student leaders, parents leaders, education attorneys, and advocates working to improve school climate and stop the school to prison and deportation pipeline throughout New York State. Together, we advocate for state policies that reduce the use of exclusionary discipline, protect students due process rights, and promote alternatives to suspensions such as restorative practices.

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