



May 31, 2024

VIA EMAIL

Senator Shelley Mayer
Legislative Office Building, Room 509
Albany, NY 12247

Re: East Ramapo Central School District Fiscal Control Board Bill

Dear Senator Mayer:

Alliance for Quality Education (AQE), Education Law Center (ELC), and the Spring Valley Branch of NAACP are writing to urge you to introduce a Senate version of Assembly Bill No. 10407, establishing a fiscal control board in East Ramapo Central School District (ERCSD). We believe the bill is an effective, targeted tool to address the dire situation in East Ramapo public schools.

As you know, in 2014, Henry M. Greenberg, the state-appointed fiscal monitor, documented the ERCSD board's fiscal mismanagement and diversion of public funds to private schools, along with failed budget votes, all of which resulted in drastic cuts to essential educational resources. These included the loss of hundreds of teachers and all district social workers; the elimination or severe reduction of music classes, electives, and extra-curricular activities; as well as other key staff, service, and program cuts. Not surprisingly student outcomes suffered as a result. For example, the district had a four-year graduation rate of 64% at that time.

Subsequent to this report, attempts have been made to redress the situation, both through judicial and legislative channels. For example, in 2016, ELC [represented](#) ERSCD parents in an unsuccessful petition asking a court to direct the New York State Regents and State Education Department to safeguard ERCSD's students' constitutional rights to a sound basic education. As you know, the Legislature passed a bill that same year installing monitors with limited powers in the school district.

Yet, a decade after the Greenberg report, fiscal mismanagement and failed budget votes persist, to the extreme detriment of public school students in East Ramapo. As the most recent state monitors' report indicates, years of neglect have resulted in deteriorating school buildings with undrinkable water. The district lacks critical staff and programming to enable students who require additional services to access a sound basic education. For example, in a district where 52% of the students are English Learners, the report notes that the ERCSD has "major deficits at every stage of the process for identification, assessment, placement, and instruction

of English language learners.” It is no wonder that student outcomes remain inadequate. The four-year graduation rate is almost the same as it was in 2014.

Despite the best efforts of the Legislature, the Commissioner of Education, and the monitors, the existing mechanisms have failed to safeguard the constitutional rights of public school students in East Ramapo. As the monitors observe, the financial and educational situation in East Ramapo is untenable and requires drastic action. Assembly Bill No. 10407 provides a promising solution. The Fiscal Control Board it proposes is a limited and targeted mechanism to redress the severe deficits in East Ramapo’s public schools.

A generation of children have passed through the ERCSD district, deprived of the educational tools they need to learn successfully. The time to act is now. We respectfully request that you introduce a bill mirroring A.10407 in the Senate to ensure that students in East Ramapo have a chance to access the education they are promised by the New York Constitution.

Thank you for your consideration,



Zakiyah Shaakir-Ansari
Co-Executive Director
Alliance for Quality Education



Robert Kim, Esq.
Executive Director
Education Law Center



Willie J. Trotman
President
Spring Valley Branch
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

cc: Assembly Member Kenneth Zebrowski
Commissioner Betty A. Rosa