

SENATOR
ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS
DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE LEADER



THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

ALBANY OFFICES:
907 LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247

315 CAPITOL
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
518-455-2585
FAX 518-426-6811

DISTRICT OFFICE:
28 WELLS AVENUE
BUILDING 3, COURTYARD
YONKERS, NEW YORK 10701-7045
(914) 423-4031
FAX (914) 423-0979

December 11th, 2013

New York State Judicial Institute
Pace University Law School
84 North Broadway
White Plains, NY 10603

Dear Friends,

Thank you for this opportunity to send greetings to all of you. I regret that I am unable to join you today, but a prior commitment in Albany precluded me from attending the conference. But I am still very encouraged by the fact that you all have come here to explore what can be done to transform school justice and improve educational outcomes for our kids.

I would like to thank Former Chief Judge Judith Kaye, Chair of the New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children and her staff, for their hard work organizing this conference and tireless advocacy for bringing change to student discipline. I also thank Honorable Juanita Bing Newton, Dean of the New York Judicial Institute, for hosting today's conference here in White Plains.

The facts presented in Judge Judith Kaye's report, *Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court*, are staggering. Tens of thousands of K-12 students are being suspended or arrested in school each year for minor, behavior-related incidents. A study by Student Advocacy in Westchester County found more than 9,000 students were suspended in Westchester in 2011, and 93% of these were for non-violent offenses. We also know that children suspended or arrested in school are disproportionately students of color or with special needs. These young people are much less likely to graduate high school in four years and more likely to have involvement with the criminal justice system throughout their lives. We must find better ways to promote order in the classroom so that we can preserve our schools as positive environments for learning. Under no circumstances can they be pipelines to prison.

I am a steadfast partner on these issues and will continue to work with you and my conference to find viable solutions to school discipline which meet these goals. Today you are here to talk about practical alternatives to suspension and arrest for nonviolent incidents that keep our students in school, afford them the opportunities they deserve to receive an education and, in return, become productive members of society. I thank you again for your presence here and your hard work. I look forward to being a strong partner with you on behalf of our children.

Sincerely,

Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senator, 35th District
Democratic Conference Leader