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Source: NYSUT Media Relations

ALBANY, N.Y. May 13, 2015 – New York State United Teachers today applauded Assembly leaders for introducing legislation that takes a significant step toward protecting students by reducing inappropriate state testing while recognizing that teacher evaluations must be fair and objective. NYSUT said the Assembly’s proposed changes would protect school aid increases and push back unrealistic deadlines, and the union strongly urged the Legislature to take timely action to pass it.

“The Assembly bill is responsive to the very real concerns raised by parents and educators who see the tremendous harm the stifling climate of state testing is doing to our classrooms,” said NYSUT President Karen E. Magee. “While this bill is not everything that parents and education stakeholders are asking for and need, it reduces the over-emphasis on state tests and mitigates some of the worst aspects of the governor’s ‘test and punish’ evaluation system. This is a first step – and, for now, the right step – toward an evaluation system that is fair and meaningful and supports teaching and learning.”

Magee said NYSUT would work closely with the Assembly and Senate toward swift action on legislation to correct major flaws in the new evaluation system adopted in the state budget.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta thanked Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie and Education Committee Chairwoman Cathy Nolan, as well as other Assembly members who have been advocating for public education. Pallotta said the Assembly bill would push back until November 17 the June 30, 2015, deadline for the Regents to adopt regulations and would delay full implementation of the new APPR system by one year until November 15, 2016, while decoupling evaluations from promised state aid increases.

“It is absolutely essential that school districts receive their agreed-upon state aid increases, which are necessary to support programs that help students, even as education stakeholders work to implement the governor’s problematic teacher evaluation system,” Pallotta said.

In addition, Pallotta said the Assembly bill would appropriate \$8.4 million to the State Education Department so it could release more test questions and valuable information about how students answered questions; amends the state growth model to include additional information about student poverty, achievement and prior academic history, for example; and eliminates an unfunded mandate that school districts hire independent observers. Instead, the bill allows voluntary demonstration projects in which independent observers can be used to supplement observations by principals.

NYSUT Vice President Catalina Fortino noted the Assembly bill allows school districts to use locally selected measures of student achievement as part of the student performance category, and directs the state education commissioner to establish a content review committee of educators to review state tests for age-appropriateness and readability.

“This bill takes steps toward improving transparency and reducing the over-reliance on state testing, while bringing the voice of the experts – experienced teachers who are working in our classrooms – into the room to review state tests for length, readability and age-appropriateness,” Fortino said.

New York State United Teachers is a statewide union with more than 600,000 members in education, human services and health care. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.

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