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## **50+ Students Host Rally at the State Capitol Calling on Legislators to Pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act**

*[\\*Click here for photos from the event\\*](#)*

*[\\*Click here for the link to the livestream of the action\\*](#)*

ALBANY, NEW YORK—Today, 50+ students with the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC), along with numerous state legislators, held a press conference and rally to call on NY State to pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act ([S.7198/A5197](#)).

Across New York, **Black and Latinx students as well as students with disabilities are suspended at disproportionately high rates** — and **Black students are 5x more likely to get suspended than their white counterparts**. Suspensions are given for minor behaviors like lateness and dress code violations. Additionally, yearly suspensions are not capped and can encompass 180 days, equivalent to an entire school year. Suspended students are often not provided the opportunity to make up missed work, projects, and exams. School suspensions increase the likelihood of not graduating on time, dropping out, and becoming involved in the criminal legal system.

When looking at other states, it's apparent that New York is behind. New Jersey prohibits suspensions for grades Pre-K-2, both Tennessee and Ohio do not allow more than 10 days of suspension per school year, and in Illinois suspensions and expulsions are limited to last resort measures.

The Solutions Not Suspensions Act will end the reliance on school suspensions as a default way to discipline students, establishing a restorative-justice-rooted-framework to create safe and inclusive school communities. Passing this bill would move New York to the forefront of efforts to finally end the school-to-prison pipeline and eliminate racial inequities in school discipline. The bill will:

- Require school codes of conduct to use suspension as a last resort, encouraging restorative approaches to discipline and emotional supports to proactively foster a school community based on cooperation, communication, trust, and respect
- Limit the use of suspensions from 180 to 20 school days (except when required by federal law)
- Prohibit suspensions for minor infractions such as tardiness, dress code violations, or insubordination
- End the use of suspensions for students pre-k through third grade
- Require that students who are suspended receive academic instruction, and the opportunity to earn credit, complete assignments, and take exams

“Current suspension policies negatively impact the education of many students in our state. Excessive suspensions harm children, making them more likely to be incarcerated as adults and less likely to attend

a four-year college. At this critical moment, we need policies that promote emotional well-being, help heal, and don't perpetuate practices that have disproportionately harmed a student's path forward. This bill solves many problems relating to excessive suspensions and contributes to ending the schools to prison pipeline, significantly helping our state's children succeed," said **Senator Robert Jackson, sponsor of the Solutions Not Suspensions Act.**

**Ashley N, Youth Leader with the Youth Power Project at Make The Road New York** said, "Our schools are supposed to be sanctuaries, where we can find support and feel safe, and not feel targeted and pushed out. Instead of suspensions and zero-tolerance policies, our schools need more social workers and restorative justice programs that can support our needs and mental health."

"For far too long, schools in our state have turned to zero-tolerance school discipline policies, using punitive measures on young people, especially Black and Brown youth. Criminalizing normal youthful behavior has created a school-to-prison pipeline pushing students in front of police officers, prosecutors, and judges instead of guidance counselors, social workers, and principals. That is why it is so vital we pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act now," said **Assembly Member Michaele Solages.**

"If the pandemic has taught us anything it's that students missing out on vital class time fall behind academically and this is harmful to them long-term. I want schools to feel supportive and to not heavily rely on pushing students out of school through suspensions. When I was younger I didn't think I had enough people around me to support me and I don't want students to continue to feel unsupported." said **Alexandra C, High School Senior and Youth Leader with Sistas & Brothas United and the Urban Youth Collaborative.**

**Assembly Member Latrice Walker** said, "Black and brown students have for far too long been disproportionately subjected to school suspensions compared to their white counterparts. Suspensions aren't effective and they remove students from their learning environment. Suspensions are overused and they normalize harsh punishment. They are the first steps toward sending students of color down the school-to-prison pipeline. I am a co-sponsor of the Solutions Not Suspensions Act and I encourage my colleagues to pass it during this session."

"I taught at a middle school with just 3 counselors for all of its students — and then I watch a pandemic turn their lives upside down. As kids return to the classroom from the trauma and disruption of the pandemic, we should be more horrified than ever that New York is continuing to provide such inadequate support while continuing the arcane practice of suspension. Students that are in their senior year of high school today were in the 5th grade when this bill was introduced; every day that the legislature drags its feet, more students are left behind or fed into the school-to-prison pipeline." said **Senator Jabari Brisport.**

**About the Urban Youth Collaborative:** [The Urban Youth Collaborative](#) is a student-led coalition of NYC youth organizing groups fighting to end the school-to-prison pipeline and transform the city's public schools into supportive learning environments. Member groups include Future of Tomorrow, Make the Road NY, and Sistas and Brothas United.

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