



## **SNS Statement Urging Comprehensive Action on Calls for Police-Free Schools**

For years, the Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition (formerly Safe and Supportive Schools) has worked to disrupt the school to prison and deportation pipeline in New York. A primary focus has been the adoption of legislation that 1) eliminates any role for police in school discipline matters and 2) ensures that youth behavior is addressed with solutions that keep students connected to their school communities and engaged in their education.

The growing calls for police-free schools recognize that the tools and tentacles of our carceral system have no place in our children's learning environments. This extends to the "zero tolerance" approach to school misbehavior, which has its roots in the failed policies of Broken Windows policing. Specifically, this moment forces us to reckon with the inhumanity of long-term suspensions, which remove children from their school communities, sever ties to trusted adults, deny access to systems of power and privilege, and increase the chances of children being subject to police violence and engagement with the criminal legal system.

Along with calls to divest from police, we must also address the influence of law enforcement in our schools on our approach to school discipline. Just as the presence of police personnel in schools leads to the criminalization of normative child and adolescent behavior with a response that is too often aggressive, the use of suspensions increases the likelihood that students will not complete their education.

As in our carceral system, racism is a primary driver of suspensions. Black and brown students are suspended at far greater rates than white students and suffer more harsh exclusionary responses. Black students are overwhelmingly suspended for less serious rule violations than white students. The consequences are staggering. Schools outside of New York City are 4.2 times more likely to suspend Black students than White students, while in New York City Black students are 5.5 times more likely to be suspended than White students.<sup>1</sup>

The Judge Judith S. Kaye Solutions Not Suspensions Act promotes proven methods that hold students accountable while helping them learn from their mistakes and keeping them in supportive classrooms. Specifically, the bill will:

- End the use of suspensions for K-3 students;
- Promote the use of restorative justice and other successful discipline techniques in place of punishments that remove students from their learning environment;

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<sup>1</sup> [https://equityinedny.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2019/08/Stolen-Time\\_2018.pdf](https://equityinedny.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2019/08/Stolen-Time_2018.pdf)

- Limit the amount of time that a student can be out of school to 20 school days, and guarantee access to appropriate work and instruction so that students who are suspended can stay on track academically;
- Prohibit suspensions for minor infractions, such as tardiness, dress code violations, or insubordination, which are better addressed in school; and
- Require charter schools to follow state education law on student behavior and school discipline.

Schools, like our communities, must become places where people of color are included, respected, and supported. We urge you to pass the Judge Judith S. Kaye Solutions Not Suspensions Act, so our children can return to safer schools that value their humanity.

**The Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition** is a group of organizers, direct service providers, student leaders, education attorneys, and advocates working to improve school climate and stop the school to prison and deportation pipeline throughout New York State.