

Parent Teacher Association of Bayside High School

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Paul DiBenedetto, President

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Community Outraged by School Underfunding

Considering Legal Action in Face of DOE Indifference

Bayside, NY, September 9, 2019: Thousands of community residents are joining with the families of 3,000 students of Bayside High School (www.baysidehighschool.org) to challenge the Department of Education's (DOE) failure to respond to their demands for fair funding of their venerable school.

"Congress Member Meng, Borough President Katz, State Senator Liu, State Assemblyman Braunstein, Council Member Vallone and Community Board 11 support this effort," declared David Solano, Vice-President of the Friends of Bayside High School, an alumni group that provides internship and other opportunities. "DOE Fair Student Funding is anything but fair!"

"Our efforts to engage the DOE have been respectful," said PTA President Paul DiBenedetto, "but met with false responses, silence and disrespect. Literally thousands of residents and parents contacted the DOE in to provide equitable funding, but they refuse to listen. Isn't this DOE supposed to be all about community and parent involvement? The school graduates 97-98% of its kids each year with almost all going straight to colleges. Is the DOE penalizing excellence?"

DiBenedetto said that while funding is supposed to be based on the needs of each student, the DOE discounts the percentage of Fair Student Funding it provides to schools. "Our research shows a tale of two systems: over 130 small high schools receive 100% to 128% of their amount due. Other schools get 90% to 99% of theirs. The lowest funded are the large schools like Bayside- no schools get lower funding in terms of real dollars per student than Bayside," he explained. "The school has been unable to hire over 20 teachers needed to replace retirements and properly staff our programs. Now the DOE is demanding cuts to guidance and other supports for our students, 30% of whom are special education or English Language Learners."

"Schools that do the hard work of building programs to attract students, like Bayside, are denied program funding that the DOE promised," he added. "With 13,000 applications, we get no CTE (Career & Technical Education) portfolio funding, about \$300.00 per student, for any of our 6 NYS approved programs while the Specialized High Schools and highly selective schools like Townsend Harris get \$1,000.00 per student- just for being selective? Bayside takes all types of learners from three Boroughs."

TURN OVER

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Added Solano "Other schools without approved programs get this funding. Bayside-the largest CTE school in the DOE receives no CTE funding as a CTE school? A school that services all types of learners from all parts of Queens as well as from the Bronx and Brooklyn is shorted by \$3.6 million in funding? It's ridiculous and this is the year it stops."

"It's not a question of Albany shorting the City on funds. They have the money," declared DiBenedetto. "They apparently think \$15 billion of a \$25 billion operating budget going to overhead and big raises for the top brass is the way you run a Department. They cut \$750 million from Fair Student Funding to accomplish this and blame the State?"

"It may be time to take the decisions out of the DOE's hands and into the courts. As parents, we have a vested interest in seeing our children receive the same funding as other children. As community residents, we have a vested interest in seeing this school continue to flourish," DiBenedetto added. "If the DOE continues on this path, the parents and community will seek legal redress of their capricious funding patterns. It's obvious favoritism."

"It's David versus Goliath" stated DiBenedetto, "but remember who won that fight."

The chronic low funding has impacted the school's number of teachers and classes as well as fundamental student support services. Bayside has 6 NYSED approved CTE programs and services 3,000 students including 30% with special needs or who are English Language Learners. Bayside High School, established in 1936, is a community center and the school's popular programs are open to all Queens residents. They and annually attract 12,000-13,500 applications for 700 freshmen seats.

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