

MANY Thanks! The Museum Education Act Passes Both Houses of the New York State Legislature in Unanimous Votes



June 27, 2018

Dear Members, Friends, and Colleagues,

I am pleased to share the news that on Wednesday June 20, 2018 the New York State Assembly passed A.3892A, the Museum Education Act (MEA). This bill, sponsored in the New York State Assembly by Matthew Titone (D, Staten Island), was passed by the State Senate in April (S.1676A) through the tireless efforts of its long-time champion and sponsor Betty Little (R, Queensbury). The bill now heads to the Governor's desk where his signature would make it law.

The MEA creates a mechanism to distribute critically needed program funds to New York's cultural organizations who steward the state's heritage regardless of budget size, geographic location, or content area. The bill directs the Commissioner of Education to establish and implement a program that will provide access to competitive funding for curriculum-based educational programming, including transportation of students to museums or museum staff to school classrooms and the production of exhibitions directly linked to state education standards.

It has the potential to significantly improve the way that museums work with their communities. It will help create fair and equal access to our history, art, and culture and enhance learning. In these times of rapidly changing political positions, economic volatility, and shifting demographics, keeping our museum doors open will help New Yorkers learn about and appreciate our state's important role in our national story.

"I am very proud to have sponsored the Museum Education Act and to see it pass both houses after many years of hard work." Titone said. "Arts, culture, and education have always been priorities of mine, and this legislation helps foster them in a mutually supportive way to greatly benefit New York State's children and students of all ages. We have over 1,500 museums, historical societies, zoos, botanical gardens, and cultural arts institutions, and they are underutilized by our educational system. The Museum

Education Act fills this gap by providing state support to educational services by these institutions in a statewide effort that will improve student performance and access to knowledge.”

“There is so much students can learn beyond the walls of their schools,” said Senator Betty Little. “Throughout our state, we have incredible museums, zoos, aquariums, and art galleries. ‘Hands-on’ is great way to learn but often not possible in the classroom. A curriculum-based connection between schools and our museums will engage more students in a meaningful and memorable way.”

“We are thrilled that the Assembly and Senate have passed the Museum Education Act as we work to expand access to education programs at museums in New York,” said State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia. “When funded, this bill will provide much-needed support to our world-class cultural institutions to improve programs for students and develop curricular aids for teachers that incorporate museums’ incredible collections and exhibitions. We look forward to working with our partners in the Legislature and Executive Branch to identify the funding so students can enjoy the unique learning experiences at New York’s museums, zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, and arts institutions.”

For its role in advancing equity in the education of New York’s children, the New York State Board of Regents designated the MEA a budget priority for them this year. “I’m so pleased that the Museum Education Act has passed in the Assembly and Senate,” said Regent Roger Tilles, Chair of the Regents Committee on Cultural Education. “New York State has some of the best museums and cultural organizations in the world. It’s so important for our students to visit these institutions and experience learning about history, science, and the arts through museum collections and programs.”

Board of Regents Chancellor Betty A. Rosa said the Board was pleased to learn that the Assembly and Senate passed the MEA. “Museums and cultural institutions engage and educate students in unique ways through artifacts, exhibitions, and educational programs,” said Rosa. “This bill is another step towards advancing equity in our education system so students in low-income communities can have greater access to the remarkable learning opportunities at cultural institutions.”

I extend my sincerest thanks to all of MANY’s current and former staff and board members whose years of dedicated work helped to make the passage of the bill possible. I would also like to thank those legislators who played key roles in getting the bill passed in their respective houses: Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, State Senator Rich Funke, the chair of the Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks & Recreation Committee and Assembly Member Danny O’Donnell, the chair of Tourism, Arts & Sports Committee, State Senator Carl Marcellino, chair of the Senate Education Committee, and Assembly Member Cathy Nolan, chair of the Assembly Education Committee.

[Click here](#) to see final version of the passed legislation with all of the legislative sponsors listed.

I look forward to letting you know more about MEA funding and implementation.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Erika Sanger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Erika Sanger
Executive Director, MANY