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NYS LAWMAKERS, MUSEUMS, AND EDUCATION ADVOCATES CALL FOR PASSAGE OF ‘MUSEUM EDUCATION ACT’ (MEA), INCLUSION IN STATE’S FINAL BUDGET

Legislation to Provide Grants to Eligible Cultural and Historical Institutions

ALBANY, N.Y. – Assemblymember Patricia Fahy (D – Albany) and Senator Jose Serrano (D – Bronx) were joined today by the Museum Association of New York (MANY) and other advocates to call for the passage of the Museum Education Act (MEA) and its inclusion in the state’s final budget for FY2020, to provide leading New York State cultural and historical institutions with financial assistance to develop and expand existing curriculum-based programs for students. A competitive grant program would help remove transportation-related cost barriers that prevent many school districts from connecting students with these institutions as part of their regular curriculum(s).

New York State is home to more museums, historical societies and sites, zoos, and botanical gardens than any other state, which attract over 60 million visitors each year, including 6 million students. Due to financial constraints and economic setbacks weathered over the last 10 years, several school districts throughout the state have been forced to cut educational field trips from their transportation budgets. The MEA establishes a competitive grant program overseen by the state Department of Education (DOE), for which the New York State Board of Regents estimates $5 million in budgetary implications and lists the MEA as a legislative priority for New York’s students that stands to ‘expand access to education programs in cultural institutions’.

A 2013 study conducted by The Wagner Group as part of the ‘Travel Effect’ campaign surveyed over 400 individuals who attended regular field trips as K – 12 students, demonstrating that students who participated in regular educational field trips were up to 59% more likely to achieve better grades, and that 63% were also more likely to attend some form of higher education. The MEA would allow more students to experience and receive hands-on learning in any of our state’s many significant cultural and historical institutions – while supporting these institutions with grant-based aid as many lack a dedicated stream of funding – and remove cost burdens on school districts, improving long-term outcomes for New York students throughout the state, regardless of background.

“Over the last decade, school districts throughout New York State have been forced to cut costs and consolidate budgets, often leading to cuts in their transportation budgets,” said Assemblymember Fahy. “Increasing the number of educational field trips students take directly correlates to their academic and social outcomes – studies show that this type of exposure can lead to a student being more likely to attend college by up to 63%. Moreover, museums and other institutions have struggled financially as school trips and curriculum-based programs continue to decline. The MEA will help connect students with New York’s museums and institutions and enable school districts to provide students with more field trip opportunities – at little to no cost to the district.”
"As a longtime advocate for arts education, I've seen firsthand the positive effects of exposing students to cultural programming," said Senator Serrano. "The Museum Education Act connects school districts and museums to provide more educational field trips for our students. For many young people, a school field trip might be their first opportunity to visit a cultural institution. By incorporating experiential learning into school curricula, this bill allows students to relate their classwork to the wider world and provides them greater access to New York's world class educational programming. Thank you to Assemblymember Fahy for her commitment to education in our state."

"New York State's museums, historical sites, and cultural institutions are valued centers of history, art, and education," said Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell. "This legislation lowers barriers, improves access, and opens doors for our children to benefit and grow from the incredible educational and cultural opportunities across our State. I am proud to support this legislation and committed to improving equity so that every child can experience the excitement of engaging with a new cultural experience, historical site, or museum."

"I am thrilled that the new Museum Education Act sponsored by Assembly Member Patricia Fahy and Senator Jose Serrano to fund education programs at museums of all disciplines that serve high-need, low-resource communities regardless of the location of the museum or how it was chartered, has been advanced in the legislature," said Erika Sanger, Executive Director of the Museum Association of New York (MANY). "The Museum Education Act will help New York’s museums share our history and our culture with our communities and future generations. The essential role that museums play in our society is most clearly seen when children can learn from authentic objects that illustrate the stories of all New Yorkers."

"School board members strongly support cultural enrichment opportunities for students. If enacted into law, this legislation would provide greater opportunities for students to visit the many outstanding museums and cultural institutions in our state that enhance learning," said New York State School Boards Executive Director, Robert S. Schneider.

"The New York Library Association supports all efforts to connect every citizen with cultural resources and experiences, especially our students and teachers," said Jeremy Johannesen, Executive Director of the New York Library Association. "The Museum Education Act provides Governor Cuomo with an opportunity to demonstrate his commitment to expanding opportunities for the youth of New York to access our cultural and historic resources. We are optimistic that this year’s budget will provide desperately needed funding to our museum and libraries."