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**THREE VILLAGE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Setauket, New York**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION AGENDA MATERIALS**

**DATE OF BOARD MEETING: March 2, 2016**

**DATE MATERIAL SUBMITTED: Feb. 26, 2016**

**OFFICE OF ORIGIN: Superintendent**

**CATEGORY OF ITEM: Discussion**

**TITLE: Request Regarding East Ramapo Central School District**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Discuss the request received from Strong East Ramapo regarding the East Ramapo Central School District.

***NOT AN OFFICIAL RECORD; SUBJECT TO CHANGE***

February 1, 2016

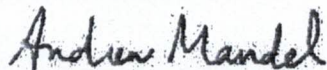
On behalf of Strong East Ramapo, a coalition of over 3,500 public school parents, community members and concerned citizens, I am writing to request that your board lend its support to an issue of grave importance to fellow New Yorkers committed to public education.

You may have already learned about the East Ramapo Central School District in Rockland County from various media reports, including a New York Times op-ed entitled "When A School Board Victimizes Kids" co-written by Chancellor Merryl Tisch. Our district, which has 8,500 public school students (90 percent of whom are children of color) and 24,000 non-public school students, is governed by a school board dominated by non-public school parents who have dismantled public services (slashing art, music, advanced classes, social workers, all but 2.5 hours of kindergarten) while increasing funding for non-public schools, authorizing costly out-of-district special education placements for non-public school students, and hiring expensive lawyers to defend their practices. In 2014, the State Education Department's investigation uncovered both "reckless mismanagement" of the district and "favoritism" of non-public schools over public schools. In 2015, former NYC schools chancellor Dennis Walcott's report said the school board "persistently failed to act in the best interests of the public school students."

The New York State Board of Regents concluded that the way to stop this crisis is to pass legislation that would authorize an independent state monitor to provide checks and balances for this unique and very problematic situation. Our local lawmakers sponsored a bill that has garnered the endorsements of our neighboring school boards, the Rockland County School Boards Association, the Alliance for Quality Education, the New York City Bar Association, and many other groups. The bill passed the Assembly last year, but we need to build support within the Senate leadership of Long Island. This is why your support is so critical: your Senator needs to hear that, given the conclusions of multiple state investigations, it is both appropriate and necessary for the state to ensure that the East Ramapo School Board is upholding its fiduciary responsibility to public school students.

Attached is a draft resolution for your board to consider. Please contact me via e-mail (strongeastramapo@gmail.com) or by phone (646-483-8660) to let me know if your board has passed the resolution, or to discuss it further before voting. A representative from our group would also be happy to attend an upcoming school board meeting to brief your board on this matter in person.

With kind regards,



Andrew Mandel  
Co-Founder, Strong East Ramapo

Enclosures: 2



## **Resolution on New York State Monitor in East Ramapo**

WHEREAS: In recent years, the school board of the East Ramapo Central School District in Spring Valley, N.Y. has denied public school students—largely children of color from low-income backgrounds—basic educational programs and staff, such as full-day kindergarten, art, music, athletics, advanced classes, assistant principals and social workers, while simultaneously increasing funding for students attending non-public schools;

AND WHEREAS: In 2014, New York State Education Department Monitor Hank Greenberg produced a comprehensive, empirically-based report declaring the district and school board has recklessly mismanaged funds, not complied with state and federal law, has entirely depleted the district's millions in reserves, has exhibited repeated favoritism toward non-public schools over public schools, has demonstrated deep disrespect of the community, and warrants diversity and transparency training;

AND WHEREAS: In 2015, three New York State Education Department Monitors—Mr. Dennis Walcott, Dr. Monica George-Fields and Dr. John Sipple—affirmed Mr. Greenberg's findings and concluded that the school board has "persistently failed to act in the best interests of public school students";

AND WHEREAS: Both studies recommended an independent monitor to serve as a check and balance of the school board to ensure educational quality and fiscal integrity of the district, a position unanimously endorsed by the New York State Board of Regents and officially supported by dozens of local and state-wide organizations, including the Rockland County School Boards Association and the New York City Bar Association;

AND WHEREAS: State intervention requires the authorization of Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature;

AND WHEREAS: Our school community stands with the students attending the East Ramapo Central School District and believes that the unique problems and prolonged crisis in the district, documented by multiple studies, obligate the state to increase its formal involvement;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That our Board supports the legislation introduced by Rockland County's lawmakers to bring oversight with veto power to East Ramapo and urges our lawmakers to vote in favor of its passage.





Rockland County School Boards Association  
c/o Rockland BOCES  
65 Parrott Road  
West Nyack, New York 10994

June 1, 2015

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Senator Marcellino  
LOB 811  
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Assemblywoman Nolan  
LOB 836  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Cuomo, Senator Marcellino and Assemblywoman Nolan,

We urge you and your fellow Education Committee members to pass proposed legislation S3821 / A5355 which would authorize the Commissioner of Education to appoint a state monitor to oversee the East Ramapo School District in Rockland County. The public school students of the East Ramapo School District would greatly benefit from the much needed and overdue oversight.

By way of endorsing this legislation, it is our intention to support constructive aid and corrective oversight to the East Ramapo School District and thus restore trust within the community. For years, the spirit of collaboration and commitment to all the children, between the school board and community members of East Ramapo, has eroded and been replaced with suspicion, ill will and dissension. A monitor will provide objective and transparent guidance which will aid relationships and restore public confidence in the governance system.

Sincerely,

Pamela Frederick  
Executive Director

Rockland County School Boards Association

CC: The Honorable Senator David Carlucci  
The Honorable Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffe ✓  
The Honorable Assemblyman Kenneth Zebrowski