

First 100 Days Legislative Update

from Assemblyman Steve Otis

Week of January 21st

In the new 2019 legislative session, the NYS Assembly, the Senate and Governor Cuomo are committed to moving key legislation early in the session. During the first 100 days of 2019, important bills that previously passed the Assembly, but were not voted on in the Senate, will be acted on in both houses in the upcoming weeks. Below please find an update of key pieces of state legislation that passed both the Assembly and Senate this week:

1. Standing up for Women's Rights

This week, three bills were passed and signed into law that cement women's ability to make their own reproductive healthcare decisions without governmental or employer interference.

The Reproductive Health Act ([A.21](#), Glick) updates New York State law to address constitutional flaws and recognize a woman's fundamental right to make decisions about her own healthcare. The bill would remove longstanding harmful and burdensome barriers to accessing reproductive healthcare and protect New Yorkers against potential future federal intrusion.

The Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act ([A.585A](#), Cahill), codifies in New York State Insurance Law the requirement under the federal Affordable Care Act that all health insurers provide cost-free contraceptive coverage as a part of their insurance policies, including emergency contraception.

The "Boss Bill" ([A.584](#), Jaffee) would prohibit employers from accessing an employee's personal information regarding reproductive health decision-making and prohibits employers from discriminating against employees based on the employees' or dependent's reproductive health decisions, and provides remedies for such violations.

New York was the first state to recognize the importance of protecting women's reproductive healthcare choices in 1970, three years before the landmark Roe v. Wade decision. Since then, the Assembly Majority has continued to pass legislation to expand these protections and promote gender equality.

2. Standing Up Against High Stakes Testing

Last Wednesday we passed key legislation ([A.783](#)) to end the state mandated reliance on high stakes testing for students and linking those tests to teacher evaluations (APPR). I co-sponsored this legislation as well as a similar bill we passed in the Assembly last year because the testing and evaluation process was not appropriate for students or teachers. The legislation makes critical corrections to the teacher evaluation system by returning control of evaluations back to the local level. The Board of Regents is continuing their review of best approaches for testing. Their findings will be a guide for local districts, but the ultimate decisions will be made at the local level.

3. NY DREAM Act

As done in years passed, the Assembly passed the Dream Act - legislation that would allow undocumented college-bound students who meet certain eligibility requirements – such as attending high school in New York – to access the state Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and other assistance programs, including the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), Education Opportunity Program (EOP), Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (C-STEP) and similar programs at community colleges.

The bill also establishes a scholarship fund with private donations – the DREAM Fund – and expands access to the New York State College Tuition Savings (529) Program so children of undocumented immigrant parents with a valid taxpayer identification number can set up tuition savings accounts.

“This bill is about fairness and about doing right by the ‘Dreamers’ who’ve helped make New York the vibrant and diverse place that it is today,” said Assemblyman Otis. This bill ensures that all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, are able to pursue a college higher education and can continue to contribute to our state and our economy.