S T A T E  O F  N E W  Y O R K

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2015-2016 Regular Sessions

I N  A S S E M B L Y

April 6, 2015

Introduced by M. of A. BICHOTTE -- read once and referred to the Committee on Education

AN ACT in relation to establishing the Beacon School Pilot Program in New York city schools

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "New York City Beacon School Act".

S 2. Legislative findings. Gun violence and gang activity has become a severe issue in the United States as a whole, specifically in New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Chicago. In most cases, youth join gangs because they feel they need protection, they want to be accepted, respected or all of the above. Through various youth development initiatives and programs we can create an environment that will meet these needs for young people in urban communities and thus reduce gang and gun violence. Beacon offers New York city youth with a place to grow through challenging activities, caring relationships, and opportunities. The youth development quality of the Beacon environment results in higher self-esteem among youth, increased leadership skills, and higher expectations by staff and youth for behavior and performance. Beacon reduces the likelihood of students to cut classes, bullying, and other crimes against persons or property. Beacon also provides important services and activities for neighborhood adults including sports, physical fitness, basic education, English-language instruction, GED preparation and computer instruction. Beacon creates cohesion between youths, parents, community organizations and businesses, engaging the community in an effort to reduce gang and gun violence.

S 3. Purpose. The purpose of this act is to provide all public elementary and secondary schools located in New York city the structure, flexibility and support necessary to operate under the Beacon school model to:

EXPLANATION--Matter in ITALICS (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [ ] is old law to be omitted.

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1. enable public schools and community partners, including public and private agencies, community based organizations, local government, institutions of higher education, families, after school program providers, summer program providers, museums, libraries, and other cultural institutions and civic organizations, to leverage their resources and prepare the community they serve to compete in today's global economy;

2. reduce the incidents of gun and gang violence in the New York city community by providing the activities and education necessary to engage the community; and

3. provide funding for the expansion, and the continuation of results-driven partnerships that align numerous funding streams, including public and private funding, and leverage existing funding to make every New York city public school into a Beacon school.

S 4. Definitions. As used in this act the following terms shall have the following meanings:

1. "Beacon" shall mean a community center located in public elementary and secondary school buildings, offering a range of activities and services to participants of all ages, before and after school, in the evenings, and on weekends.

2. "Host school" shall mean the point of entry for all Beacon activities located within a neighborhood.

3. "Neighborhood" shall mean the community zoned to the public school.

4. "Community based organization" shall mean any organization incorporated for the purpose of providing services or other assistance to economically or socially disadvantaged persons within its designated community. Such organization shall have a board of directors of which more than half of such members shall reside in such designated community.

5. "Community advisory council" shall mean the advisory council established by the host school.

6. "Neighborhood organization/institution for profit or not-for-profit organization" shall mean any such organization which had been approved by the host school and advisory council to participate in programs offered at the Beacon center.

S 5. The Beacon school model. 1. Every public elementary and secondary school shall be empowered to use funds whether public, private, or otherwise, to transform the host school into a Beacon school, in order to: (i) improve student achievement in the school; (ii) create incentives to grow and sustain community partnerships so that the school and community work together to improve student academic achievement and social and emotional well-being; and (iii) decrease youth gang and gun violence in the community.

2. Programs under the Beacon school model shall include but not be limited to recreational programs, social services, educational enrichment, and vocational activities.

3. All Beacon schools shall address youth development programming, academic support and enhancement, parent involvement and family support, and neighborhood safety and community building as determined necessary by the host school and community advisory council.

S 6. Beacon advisory council. 1. Each Beacon shall develop and maintain an advisory council as defined in this section to guide the programming and activities of the Beacon center.

2. The council shall provide governance and serve as an organizing and market vehicle for participation in the Beacon center.

3. The goal of the council shall be to enable the Beacon center to maintain close ties to the host school and the community to strengthen

the focus on supporting educational achievement and other positive outcomes for youth and families.

4. Council members shall be volunteer representatives from the community committed to participating in the discussion, planning, and implementation of ideas, activities, and programs that further the goals of the Beacon center in the five areas of: (i) leadership development, (ii) academic enrichment, (iii) family strengthening, (iv) personal capacity building in community residents and (v) the reduction of violence.

5. The council shall maintain a membership which is consistent with the Beacon Middle School Initiative launched by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development.

S 7. Duties of the council. The council is charged with the following tasks: participate in the assessment and development of Beacon center programming needs; assist with initial and regularly updated needs assessments to guide the development of Beacon programming that is responsive to priority community needs and interests; participate in evaluating the effectiveness of Beacon services and recommend program improvements; conduct ongoing efforts to elicit evaluative information from residents on Beacon center activities and services via satisfaction surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other evaluation methods; complete advisory council training designed to build capability for leadership and self-monitoring; conduct a minimum of 1 council meeting per month for a total of at least 12 meetings per year; assist in the review and planning of Beacon center programming; develop support in the community for Beacon center activities and convey ideas and feedback; identify and facilitate needed linkages and promote cultural competence in services; work directly with the youth division of the local police department and the New York city department of juvenile justice to implement programming and activities to address gang/gun/youth violence, youth re-entry, and methods for educational/vocational success.

S 8. The city of New York shall provide annual funding to support the implementation of Beacon schools. This funding shall be matched in an amount equal to that provided in an appropriation by the state.

S 9. This act shall take effect on the three hundred sixty-fifth day after it shall have become a law.