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2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 31, 2021

Introduced by Sens. REICHLIN-MELNICK, SKOUFIS, THOMAS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Education -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend chapter 89 of the laws of 2016 relating to supplementary funding for dedicated programs for public school students in the East Ramapo central school district, in relation to the powers and duties of monitors in the East Ramapo central school district

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Paragraph (a) of section 3 of chapter 89 of the laws of 2016 relating to supplementary funding for dedicated programs for public school students in the East Ramapo central school district is amended and a new paragraph (c) is added to read as follows:

(a) Appointment of monitor team. In accordance with the powers and duties of the board of regents and the commissioner pursuant to subdivision 2 of section 305 of the education law, section 308 of the education law, and section 215 of the education law, [~~the commissioner shall appoint~~] up to [~~3~~] **2** monitors **shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the commissioner** to carry out the provisions of this act including but not limited to providing oversight, guidance and technical assistance related to the educational and fiscal policies, practices, programs and decisions of the East Ramapo central school district, the board of education and the superintendent.

(c) The reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by the monitor or monitors while performing his or her official duties shall be paid by the school district. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the monitor or monitors shall be entitled to defense and indemnification by the school district to the same extent as a school district employee.

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

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§ 2. Sections 4, 6, 7 and 8 of chapter 89 of the laws of 2016 relating to supplementary funding for dedicated programs for public school students in the East Ramapo central school district, section 8 as amended by section 42-b of part A of chapter 56 of the laws of 2020, are amended and four new sections 9, 10, 11 and 12 are added to read as follows:

§ 4. **(a) (i)** The monitor or monitors shall be entitled to attend all meetings of the board, including executive sessions; provided however, such monitor or monitors shall not be considered for purposes of establishing a quorum of the board, provided further that the **monitor or** monitors may be excused from executive sessions when [~~**privileged issues**~~] **proposed, pending or current litigation involving the monitor or monitors or the department** are being discussed. The East Ramapo central school district shall fully cooperate with any monitor or monitors appointed by the commissioner, including but not limited to providing such monitor or monitors with access**, within 48 hours of such request from the monitor or monitors,** to any necessary documents and records of the district including access to electronic information systems, databases and planning documents, consistent with all applicable state and federal statutes including but not limited to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)(20 U.S.C. §1232g) and section 2-d of the education law. **The monitor or monitors shall provide a copy of such request for any document or record to the board.**

(ii) The board clerk shall provide the monitor or monitors with copies of the board agenda and all resolutions and motions on such agenda for each board meeting no later than 72 hours prior to such board meeting. If a proposed resolution or motion is for the purpose of approving a contract or to comply with state law or regulation and the date to comply with such law or regulation is within 21 days of the board meeting, the board clerk shall provide the monitor or monitors with copies of the proposed resolution and proposed contract language at least seven days prior to such meeting.

(iii) In the event the monitor or monitors are not provided with copies of proposed resolutions or motions 72 hours prior to a board meeting or in the case of a proposed resolution or motion for the purpose of approving a contract or to comply with state law or regulation, seven days prior to the next board meeting, the monitor or monitors may, at their discretion, remove an item including board resolutions or motions, except for resolutions or motions related to collective bargaining agreements negotiated in accordance with article 14 of the civil service law, from consideration by the board at such meeting. Upon the failure of the board clerk to provide proposed resolutions or motions as required by paragraphs (ii) and (iii) of this subdivision, the monitor or monitors shall provide notice of such failure to the board. An item removed from consideration by the monitor or monitors may not be reconsidered by the board for a period of 10 days or the next board meeting; whichever is later unless the monitor or monitors expressly authorizes consideration at an earlier date.

(b) The board, in consultation with the monitor or monitors, shall adopt a conflict of interest policy that complies with all existing applicable laws, rules and regulations that ensures its board members and administration act in the school district's best interest and comply with applicable legal requirements. The conflict of interest policy shall include, but not be limited to:

(i) a definition of the circumstances that constitute a conflict of interest;

(ii) procedures for disclosing a conflict of interest to the board;

(iii) a requirement that the person with the conflict of interest not be present at or participate in board deliberations or votes on the matter giving rise to such conflict, provided that nothing in this subdivision shall prohibit the board from requesting that the person with the conflict of interest present information as background or answer questions at a board meeting prior to the commencement of deliberations or voting relating thereto;

(iv) a prohibition against any attempt by the person with the conflict to influence improperly the deliberation or voting on the matter giving rise to such conflict; and

(v) a requirement that the existence and resolution of the conflict be documented in the board's records, including in the minutes of any meeting at which the conflict was discussed or voted upon.

(c) In the event that the monitor or monitors find that an adopted resolution or motion, a proposed resolution or motion, or that the board's failure to act violates state law, the rules of the board of regents, the regulations of the commissioner, or is inconsistent with the terms of the long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan, the monitor or monitors may:

(i) Override adopted or proposed resolutions or motions by the board through the issuance of a directive which shall contain the specific findings as to the necessity of such override and any potential corrective action by the board that would address the deficiency in such adopted or proposed resolution or motion. The monitor or monitors shall provide written notice to the board, superintendent and commissioner of their intention to override the adopted or proposed resolution or motion at any time but in no event later than 48 hours after such resolution or motion was adopted by the board unless the commissioner has extended the period to override due to extenuating circumstances that necessitate additional time. The override notice shall stay the proceedings of the board on such adopted resolution or motion or, if the notice is provided prior to action by the board, it shall remove such proposed resolution or motion from consideration by the board pending the issuance of a directive by the monitor or monitors. The monitor or monitors must submit the directive to the board, superintendent and the commissioner no later than 10 days following notice of such override. Upon the issuance of a directive, the override of the board's adopted or proposed resolution or motion shall be final and conclusive unless the monitor or monitors fail to issue such directive within 10 days or within such period established by the monitor or monitors if the period was extended, withdraws such override, or the commissioner overrules the monitor or monitors' override within 10 days of the issuance of the directive. The monitor or monitors may extend the period to submit such directive, at intervals of 10 additional days for each extension, if the board, superintendent or school district employees fail to provide all relevant information requested by the monitor or monitors related to the adopted or proposed resolution or motion subject to such override within 48 hours of such request.

(ii) Submit a resolution for adoption by the board. The resolution shall be submitted to the clerk no later than 48 hours prior to the next scheduled board meeting who shall cause the resolution to be placed on the next board meeting agenda and a copy to be issued to the board, superintendent and commissioner accompanied by specific findings as to the necessity of such resolution. The monitor or monitors may direct the board to meet at a date prior to their next scheduled board meeting to

take up such resolution. The monitor or monitors may withdraw the resolution prior to, or during, the next board meeting, if the board takes sufficient action to resolve the issues contained in the resolution. If the resolution is not withdrawn, it shall be deemed to be adopted at the next board meeting through its submission and shall have the full force and effect as any other resolution adopted by the board.

(iii) The monitor or monitors shall not override an adopted or proposed resolution or motion or submit a resolution related to collective bargaining agreements negotiated in accordance with article 14 of the civil service law.

(iv) The monitor or monitors shall not override an adopted or proposed resolution or motion or submit a resolution that would diminish mandated services to non-public schools in violation of state or federal laws, rules or regulations.

(d) The monitor or monitors may direct the board, superintendent, and/or other school district officers to undergo any training as deemed necessary and pursuant to timelines established by the state monitor or monitors. In no event shall the total number of training hours mandated by the monitor or monitors exceed fifteen hours in a single calendar year. However, the monitor or monitors may recommend additional training as deemed necessary.

(e) The monitor or monitors shall have the power to approve or disapprove the appointment of a superintendent by the board of education on or after the effective date of this act. The board shall submit the recommendation for superintendent to the monitor or monitors for approval. The monitor or monitors shall have 10 days to approve or disapprove the board's recommendation. If after such period no action is taken by the monitor or monitors, the recommendation for superintendent shall be deemed approved. If the monitor or monitors disapproves of the appointment, then the board shall recommend a new candidate for the monitor or monitors to approve or disapprove until an appointment is approved by the monitor or monitors. In the event that a vacancy occurs in the position of superintendent due to the disapproval of a recommendation, the monitor or monitors may appoint a current school employee as interim superintendent until a recommendation for superintendent is approved.

§ 6. Fiscal and operational oversight by the commissioner. During the effective period of this act the commissioner shall undertake an enhanced review of the district budget.

(a) The board of education [~~in consultation with the monitor or monitors~~] shall annually submit the school district's proposed budget for the next succeeding school year to the [~~commissioner~~] monitor or monitors no later than [~~45 days before the date scheduled for~~] March first prior to the school district's annual budget vote. The [~~commissioner~~] monitor or monitors shall review the budget to ensure that it, to the greatest extent possible, is consistent with the long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan developed and adopted pursuant to this act and expands educational programming for students including but not limited to extracurricular activities, course offerings, non-mandated support services, non-mandated art and music classes, programs and services for English language learners and students with disabilities, and maintaining class size. The [~~commissioner~~] monitor or monitors shall also review the proposed budget to ensure that it is balanced within the context of revenue and expenditure estimates and mandated programs. The [~~commissioner~~] monitor or monitors shall present his or her findings to the board of education and to the commissioner no later than [~~30~~] 45

days prior to the date scheduled for the school district's annual budget vote. The commissioner shall require the board of education [~~shall~~] to make adjustments to the proposed budget consistent with any recommendations made by the [~~commissioner~~] monitor or monitors if the commissioner determines such amendments are necessary to comply with the long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan under this act. The school district shall make available on the district's website: the initial proposed budget, the [~~commissioner's~~] monitor or monitors' findings, and the final proposed budget [~~prior to the date of the school district's budget vote~~] at least seven days prior to the date of the school district's budget hearing. In the event of a revote, the board of education, in conjunction with the monitor or monitors, shall develop and submit the school district's proposed budget for the next succeeding school year to the commissioner no later than seven days prior to the budget hearing. The board of education shall provide the commissioner with any information he or she requests in order to make a determination pursuant to this subdivision within three business days of such request.

(b) [~~The monitor or monitors appointed by the commissioner shall quarterly, and the district shall annually provide to the commissioner reports on the fiscal and operational status of the school district to ensure compliance with subdivision (a) of this section. In addition, monitors shall provide an annual report to the commissioner and comptroller on contracts that the district entered into throughout the year. All reports shall be subject to review by the comptroller at the request of the commissioner.~~] The district shall provide quarterly reports to the monitor or monitors and annual reports to the commissioner and board of regents on the academic, fiscal, and operational status of the school district. In addition, the monitor or monitors shall provide semi-annual reports to the commissioner, board of regents, the governor, the temporary president of the senate, and the speaker of the assembly on the academic, fiscal, and operational status of the school district. Such semi-annual report shall include all the contracts that the district entered into throughout the year. All reports shall be subject to review by the comptroller at the request of the commissioner.

(c) The monitor or monitors shall have the authority to disapprove travel outside the state paid for by the district.

(d) The monitor or monitors shall work with the district's shared decision-making committee as defined in 8 NYCRR 100.11 in developing and revising the long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan, district goals, implementation of district priorities and budgetary recommendations.

(e) The monitor or monitors shall assist in resolving any disputes and conflicts, including but not limited to, those between the superintendent and the board of education and among the members of the board of education.

(f) The monitor or monitors may recommend, and the board shall consider by vote of a resolution at the next scheduled meeting of the board, cost saving measures including, but not limited to, shared service agreements.

(g) The monitor or monitors shall not have the authority to recommend the board diminish mandated services to non-public schools in violation of state or federal laws, rules or regulations.

§ 7. To ensure compliance with the [~~comprehensive expenditure plan~~] long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan, in the event the district plans to reduce budget appropriations for programs restored or created under the [~~comprehensive expenditure plan or the strategic~~

~~academic and fiscal improvement plan~~] long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan as well as the sale of school buildings or other real property and capital improvement contracts in excess of one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000), the district shall submit a plan to the [~~commissioner~~] monitor or monitors for approval.

§ 8. The commissioner may overrule any decision of the monitor or monitors, except for decisions related to collective bargaining agreements negotiated in accordance with article 14 of the civil service law or decisions that would diminish mandated services to non-public schools in violation of state or federal laws, rules or regulations, if he or she deems that such decision is not aligned with the long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan or the school district's budget or is contrary to state law or regulation. If the commissioner overrules a decision of the monitor or monitors, the commissioner may direct the board to take corrective action on such matter if it is necessary to comply with state law, regulation or the long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan. In the event there is disagreement between the monitors, the commissioner may resolve such disagreements and direct the monitors to take action as a result of such resolution.

§ 9. The monitor or monitors may notify the commissioner and the board in writing when he or she deems the district is violating an element of the long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan in this act or the district failed to provide the monitor or monitors with requested documents or records within the time frame prescribed in paragraph (i) of subdivision one of section four of this act. Within twenty days, the commissioner shall determine whether the district is in violation of any of the elements of the plan highlighted by the monitor or monitors and shall order the district to comply immediately with the plan and remedy any such violation. The school district shall suspend all actions related to the potential violation of the long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan until the commissioner issues a determination. Within seven days, the commissioner shall determine if the district failed to comply with the document and record provision set forth in paragraph (i) of subdivision one of section four of this act and shall order the district to immediately provide the monitor or monitors with the requested documents or records.

§ 10. In carrying out their powers and duties, the monitor or monitors shall, to the greatest extent possible, account for the unique needs of any racial, ethnic, linguistic, or religious minority groups within the district.

§ 11. (a) Within ninety days of the effective date of this act, the board and superintendent shall appoint a community advisory board comprised of ten persons who either reside in or are employed by the East Ramapo Central School District. The superintendent and board shall jointly appoint members to the community advisory board.

(b) The community advisory board, to the greatest extent possible, shall include:

(i) at least one member who resides within the district and is the parent of a student with special needs whose education is provided for by the district;

(ii) at least one member for each of the three most common non-English languages spoken by individuals in the district based on the most recent decennial federal census;

(iii) at least one member who is a member of a civic league or organization not organized for profit but operated exclusively for the

promotion of social welfare whose mission includes advocating for the civil rights of racial and ethnic minority groups;

(iv) at least one member who is the parent of a public school student; and

(v) at least one member who is the parent of a non-public school student.

(c) Each appointment made to the community advisory board may be used to satisfy more than one of the requirements specified in subdivision (b) of this section.

(d) The community advisory board shall meet with the monitor or monitors at least four times each year and shall provide a range of community perspectives on the important issues affecting the public and non-public schools in the district.

(e) The members of the community advisory board shall receive no compensation for their services.

(f) Each member of the community advisory board shall serve for a term of one year. The superintendent and board shall jointly appoint or reappoint members when a term expires. The superintendent and board shall have the power to fill a vacancy.

§ 12. Nothing in this act shall be construed to abrogate the duties and responsibilities of the school district consistent with applicable state law and regulations.

§ 13. This act shall take effect July 1, 2016 and shall expire and be deemed repealed June 30, [~~2021, except that paragraph (b) of section five of this act and section seven of this act shall expire and be deemed repealed June 30, 2021~~] 2025.

§ 3. Paragraph (b) of section 5 of chapter 89 of the laws of 2016 relating to supplementary funding for dedicated programs for public school students in the East Ramapo central school district, as amended by section 48 of part YYY of chapter 59 of the laws of 2017, is amended to read as follows:

(b) [~~In order to receive such funds, the school district in consultation with~~] The board of education and the monitor or monitors shall develop a long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan within 6 months from the enactment of this act and shall annually revise such plan by October first of each year thereafter. Such plan, including such annual revisions thereto, shall be submitted to the commissioner for approval and shall include a set of goals with appropriate benchmarks and measurable objectives and identify strategies to address areas where improvements are needed in the district, including but not limited to its financial stability, academic opportunities and outcomes, education of students with disabilities, education of English language learners, the educational, social and emotional welfare of public school students and shall ensure compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations. The strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan shall, to the maximum extent possible, consider the demographic makeup of the district and the unique needs of minority racial, ethnic, religious and undocumented communities of interest. This improvement plan shall also include a comprehensive expenditure plan that will describe how any funds appropriated to the district in addition to those appropriated pursuant to sections 3602 and 3602-e of the education law including but not limited to the funds made available to the district pursuant to this section will be spent in the applicable school year. The comprehensive expenditure plan shall ensure that funds supplement, not supplant, expenditures from local, state and federal funds for services provided to public school students, except that such

funds may be used to continue services funded pursuant to this act in prior years. [~~Such expenditure plan shall be developed and annually revised in consultation with the monitor or monitors appointed by the commissioner.~~] The board of education [~~of the East Ramapo central school district~~] and monitor or monitors must annually conduct a public hearing on [~~the expenditure plan~~] long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan and shall consider the input of the community before adopting or revising such plan. Such [~~the expenditure plan~~] long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan shall also be made publicly available and shall be annually submitted along with comments made by the community to the commissioner for approval once the plan is finalized. Upon review of the [~~improvement plan and the expenditure plan~~] long term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plan, required to be submitted pursuant to this subdivision or section seven of this act, the commissioner shall approve or deny such plan in writing and, if denied, shall include the reasons therefor. The [~~district in consultation with the monitors~~] board of education and monitor or monitors may resubmit such plan or plans with any needed modifications thereto.

§ 4. This act shall take effect immediately; provided, however, that the amendments to chapter 89 of the laws of 2016 made by sections one, two and three of this act shall not affect the repeal of such chapter and shall be deemed to be repealed therewith.