

**NEW HYDE PARK-  
GARDEN CITY PARK**  
Union Free School District



**JENNIFER MORRISON, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools

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1950 Hillside Avenue, New Hyde Park, NY 11040 · [www.nhp-gcp.org](http://www.nhp-gcp.org) · (516) 434-2305 · Fax: (516) 352-6282

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**October 2, 2018**

***Oral Testimony regarding New York State's current parole policies and Governor Cuomo's Executive Order allowing conditional pardons that enable parolees to vote.***

Good morning. My name is Jennifer Morrison. I am Superintendent of Schools of New Hyde Park-Garden City Park UFSD. I am here to impress upon you the importance of keeping our children secure and safe. We work tirelessly to keep our children safe in school. And, on primary, special and general election days, the law requires schools to allow parolees, unidentified strangers, and unvetted election workers to enter and vote in our children's school buildings.

We are expected to keep our children safe. Schools have added visitor identification systems, security guards, security vestibules with mantraps, and security cameras to do so. Our front doors are locked to our schools all day, every day. No one is permitted to enter the building without first showing photo ID. On polling days, when children are present, we are required to leave the doors unlocked, and we are not allowed to require visitors to present identification which poses significant safety concerns. Anyone, on election polling day, can walk into our schools unannounced.

Our school buildings were built in the early and mid 1900's. They were designed to be community schools for the education of elementary children. None were designed with the idea that visitors would be entering during the school day to vote. And certainly none were designed in an era when anyone even thought of the possibility of school shootings. In one of our buildings visitors entering to vote have to pass by a student classroom and the nurse's office. Students in our adjacent hallways must pass these visitors throughout the day to go to the bathroom, the nurse, lunch, gym, music or to go to mandated services such as speech. Keep in mind these students are as young as four years old. In this age of horrific school shootings, we owe our children better than to have polling in our school buildings.

The Board of Elections offers no assistance assuring the safety of our students, teachers, and employees on election days. Nor will the Police Department station Police Officers at our buildings. I asked for that help and was advised that the Police Department would

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not assign an officer on election days to be at our polling places. The Board of Elections will not send Security Guards to guard our children or even our doors. This responsibility falls on the School District.

The Board of Elections does, however, send election workers to our buildings, who are not background-checked and have absolutely no familiarity with the schools' safety plans. Every employee in our school system that enters our buildings has been fingerprinted and is trained in emergency procedures. Election workers are not. On polling days, they are in our facilities all day long. We have even had instances where election workers have roamed through our buildings, and used student restrooms while elementary school children were in there, rather than wait for the staff bathroom to become available.

A few years ago, the vote was moved out of one of our schools, New Hyde Park Road School, subsequent to a lockdown having been called while voters were in the building. Voters and election workers ignored the lockdown, as they were not familiar with the procedures that we use to keep our children safe. Our school staff and the police upon their arrival, were unable to determine who belonged in the building and who or what might have been the cause of the lockdown. It was chaotic.

As I stated earlier, on election days, we are not allowed to ask for visitor identification. By Governor Cuomo's Executive Order, the rights of approximately 24,000 sex offenders to vote were restored. And the Department of Corrections has implemented a procedure so that sex offenders allowed entry to schools to vote after 7 p.m. They must get written permission from their parole office if they intend to vote at a school and from the school's superintendent. I assure you that I will not grant my permission, and I should not even be put in that position. Our doors do not close at 7 pm. There are sports practices and other activities in our school buildings that are attended by children.

But even if I deny that permission, how would we know if a sex offender or a murderer or a cop-killer was entering our schools on a polling day anyway, as we are not allowed to check identification? This is why polling does not belong in our schools. The initiative is misguided and will allow dangerous felons, amongst others, into schools to vote.

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To keep our children safe, our District Safety Plan requires visitors be buzzed into the building every time they visit and that upon entry into the building the visitor must show photo identification. The visitor then receives a badge, and is escorted to the main office. At the main office, the person is accompanied to their destination. At the end of their visit, they have to sign out and return their badge. In light of recent nationwide school security concerns, this process should not be expected to be bypassed on election days as it contradicts the procedures we have implemented to keep our children safe on a daily basis. These procedures were implemented based upon recommendations received from the Nassau County Police Department, among others.

The District's request for Nassau County Police Officers to provide security at two of New Hyde Park-Garden City Park UFSD's schools (Manor Oaks and Hillside Grade School) during the Primary Election which was scheduled to be held in both buildings on Friday, September 13, 2018, was denied.

Our request for traffic control during arrival and dismissal times at Manor Oaks School, located on busy and crowded Hillside Avenue, was denied. The volume of students, parents, and voters causes a significant safety issue at these times. It also displaces our staff from parking in the limited spaces when they come to work. Our lots become so congested that last election day a voter had a car accident in our parking lot.

In addition to all of the concerns I have stated, this is a huge disruption to instruction. Using schools as a voting location interferes with library classes and mandated physical education instruction for three days, the day before the vote when the voting machines and polling related items are delivered and set up, the day of the polling, and the day after the polling while we wait for the Board of Elections to remove these items.

New Hyde Park-Garden City Park School District is working with Senator Phillips, Presiding Officer Nicoletto, Assemblyman Ed Ra, and Councilman Ferrara to have all elections permanently removed from schools. In the meantime, we need assistance to keep our children safe and keep the vote and the parolees out of our schools.