

Senator Adriano Espaillat – KidsPAC Questionnaire Response 2014

1) What is your position of the city being obligated to pay rent for charter, or give them public school space for free?

After provisions impacting charter funding were inserted into the 2014 Education, Labor, and Family Assistance (ELFA) budget by the Senate Republicans, I joined majority of Democratic Conference in attempting a “hostile amendment” to remove the charter language from the bill.

Doing so would have prevented a simultaneous vote on charter and universal pre-kindergarten funding; allow an unobstructed vote on securing New York City’s historic \$300 million UPK expansion.

Despite the clear relevance of this amendment to budget bill S.6356-D, this hostile amendment was deemed “not germane,” and a vote to overrule this decision was unsuccessful.

2) What is your position on the common core standards?

Common Core’s implementation has been disastrous on many fronts: from poor-quality Spanish language materials, to inadequate community outreach and explanation, to the insufficient training that was provided to teachers and educators.

I have supported a moratorium on the use of Common Core assessments until our community is satisfied it has been given proper resources for this transition. I have also specifically raised the quality of non-English language materials issue with SED.

3) What do you think about the current testing regime?

This year, I staunchly supported of the successful push to reign in the rising and excessive amount of standardized testing that New York kids are subjected to, which interrupts classroom learning, by banning testing in grades kindergarten through second grade.

Excessive testing has created needless, counterproductive stress for students, parents and educators. It has increased teacher turnover and burnout rates, as passionate educators grapple with a shortsighted focus on testing cuts into the learning experience. Many tests impacting students’ future have also heightened the achievement gap and education inequality for low-income students from communities of color whose families cannot afford private tutoring and other supplemental resources.

4) What is your position about the teacher evaluation system?

I have strong reservations over the use of test scores for assessment purposes that do not take into account student composition, including English Language Learners, and student requiring Individual Learning Plans. Doing so encourages schools to game the system, and focus on securing preferred students instead of ensuring all students’ needs are addressed.

In particular, I have continually cited the disproportionately small enrollment ELLs in New York City charter schools as a problem that must be addressed; have stated that until this enrollment gap is closed, their effectiveness cannot be fairly measured.

I support a variety of assessment methods – but I strongly value peer assessment, and the evaluations performed by professional educators. I am proud to have the support of the United Federation of Teachers in this campaign, and I will continue to work with them to fight for appropriate assessment standards that do not penalize teachers for taking on the challenge of providing an urban education in difficult circumstances.

5) What are your views on campaign funding?

I have been an outspoken advocate for campaign finance reform that includes a matching funds system and eliminates the “multiple LLC” loophole that has empowered special interests; particularly the real estate industry at tenants’ and the general public’s expense. I support a broad range of reforms, including maximum contribution limits, and eliminating the current unlimited

6) What is your position on CFE and equitable funding?

I am proud to have served as a plaintiff in the CFE lawsuit, after filing an amicus brief in support of correcting the longstanding funding imbalance faced by New York City schools.

While we have prevailed in court, multiple consecutive gubernatorial administrations have not fulfilled the court’s wishes; initial down payments made toward the CFE’s resolution have been undone by recession-driven cuts.

Securing the funding our children are owed has been a continuing passion that I have fought for each year. As former Chair of the legislature’s Black and Latino Caucus, I held an often-fractious coalition together to delay budget agreements until additional education funding concessions are made. In the Senate, I have repeatedly voted against education budgets that made no effort to fulfill the covenant with our city’s children.

As the state’s economy continues to recover, I am committed to ensuring education funding remains at the top of the agenda. I will also be fighting hard for the \$80 million in after-school funding sought by Mayor de Blasio this year that was not allocated.

7) What is your position on raising the cap on charter schools?

Given that the number of authorized charter licenses within New York City currently exceeds the number of actual charter schools, there is no demonstrated need for raising the charter school cap.