



March 9, 2015

Mayor Bill de Blasio  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

We commend you again for fulfilling your pledge to add Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha to the 2015-16 school calendar as holidays. This is a significant step to recognize the diversity of our city. It is critical that you also keep your pledge to designate Lunar New Year as a school holiday.

When you ran for Mayor, and again when you took office, you made a pledge to recognize Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha and Lunar New Year as school holidays. This year, Lunar New Year fell during an already scheduled winter break, but we cannot depend on the luck of the calendar. In 2016, Lunar New Year falls on Monday, February 8.

Asian-American students comprise approximately 15 percent of all public school students – more than 150,000 students – in New York City, and Lunar New Year is the most important cultural celebration on the Asian calendar. At schools in neighborhoods across the city, absentee rates have been reported to be as high as 80 percent on Lunar New Year.

Parents should not have to choose between sending their kids to school or celebrating their most important cultural holiday with family. In addition, schools should not be open when large numbers of students will be absent and a school day could result in a waste of educational time and resources.

That is why Senators Golden, Squadron and Stavisky, and Assemblymembers Kim, Silver, Moya, Braunstein and Rozic successfully passed legislation, originally carried by now-Congressmember Meng, requiring consideration of those factors. Governor Cuomo signed that bill in December, and it is now law. It may be a failure to comply with this law to keep schools open on Lunar New Year without any substantive engagement with the public or with the Panel for Educational Policy.

We once again request to engage with your administration to determine how we can both fulfill the statutorily defined number of school days, and recognize the growing diversity of our city's children and the holidays they celebrate. We would like to meet with you before the 2015-2016 calendar is finalized to discuss this matter.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Maloney  
Congressmember

Grace Meng  
Congressmember

Nydia M. Velázquez  
Congresswoman



Eric Adams  
Brooklyn Borough President



Gale A. Brewer  
Manhattan Borough President



Daniel Squadron  
State Senator



Martin J. Golden  
State Senator



Toby Ann Stavisky  
State Senator



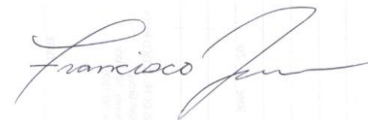
Ron Kim  
Assemblymember



Edward C. Braunstein  
Assemblymember



Michael G. DenDekker  
Assemblymember



Francisco P. Moya  
Assemblymember



Dan Quart  
Assemblymember



Nily Rozic  
Assemblymember



Sheldon Silver  
Assemblymember



Michaëlle Solages  
Assemblymember



Margaret S. Chin  
City Councilmember



Peter Koo  
City Councilmember

Whereas, CB 3 is the fourth highest racially diverse neighborhood in the City, with a foreign born population of 36%, and

Whereas, according to the 2010-2012 American Community Survey, 28.9% of CB 3 residents identified themselves as Chinese, Korean, or Vietnamese, and

Whereas, Asian American students comprise of approximately 15 percent of all public school students, at about 150,000 students in New York City, and

Whereas, Lunar New Year is the most important cultural celebration on the Asian calendar, and

Whereas, the citywide absence rates have reported to be as high as 80 percent on Lunar New Year, and

Whereas, schools should not be open when large numbers of students will be absent, and

Whereas, parents should not have to choose between sending their kids to school or celebrating their most important cultural holiday with family, and

Whereas, Senators Golden, Squadron, and Stavisky, and Assemblymembers Kim, Silver, Moya, Braunstein, and Rozic successfully passed legislation requiring consideration for the above stated factors, and

Whereas Governor Cuomo signed that bill in December, and it may be a failure to comply with this law to keep schools open on Lunar New Year without any substantive engagement with the public or with the Panel for Education Policy, and

Whereas, during the mayoral election, and again when you took office, you made a pledge to recognize Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha and Lunar New Year as school holidays, with Lunar New Year being the one outstanding holiday to be designated a school holiday, and

Whereas, the 2015-2016 school calendar has been released without Lunar New Year as a designated holiday on Monday, February 8th, 2016,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that CB 3 Manhattan strongly encourages Mayor deBalsio to engage the community and our elected officials to determine how to fulfill the statutorily defined number of school days while recognizing Lunar New Year as a school holiday.

# STATE OF NEW YORK

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6688

## IN SENATE

February 27, 2014

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Introduced by Sens. GOLDEN, SQUADRON -- read twice and ordered printed,  
and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to required attendances

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

- 1 Section 1. Paragraph b of subdivision 1 of section 3210 of the educa-  
2 tion law, as amended by chapter 821 of the laws of 1947, is amended to  
3 read as follows:  
4 b. (i) Absence for religious observance and education shall be permit-  
5 ted under rules that the commissioner shall establish.  
6 (ii) In addition, the board of education or trustees shall determine  
7 whether school session should not be held at an individual public  
8 school, or district-wide, on a day where, if school were in session,  
9 absenteeism may result in the waste of educational resources because a  
10 considerable proportion of the student population is unlikely to attend  
11 because of a religious or cultural day of observance.  
12 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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

LBD03041-01-3

**NEW YORK STATE SENATE  
INTRODUCER'S MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT  
submitted in accordance with Senate Rule VI. Sec 1**

**BILL NUMBER:** S6688

**SPONSOR:** GOLDEN

**TITLE OF BILL:** An act to amend the education law, in relation to required attendances

**PURPOSE OR GENERAL IDEA OF BILL:**

To require boards of education or trustees to determine whether school should be closed on a day where, if school were to be in session, student absenteeism would result in a waste of educational resources.

**SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC PROVISIONS:**

The Education Law is amended by adding a new section paragraph b of subdivision 1 of section 3210 to provide that boards of education or trustees must make a determination as to whether school should be closed on a day where a considerable proportion of students would not likely be in attendance because of a religious or cultural day of observance and holding school session would therefore result in a waste of educational resources.

**JUSTIFICATION:**

It may be impractical and a waste of educational resources to hold school session on a day where a considerable proportion of students will not be in attendance due to religious or cultural holidays. One example of this impracticality and waste of educational resources may occur for some schools that hold session on Lunar New Year day which traditionally occurs in late January or early February. It is one of the most significant cultural holidays for Chinese, Koreans, Japanese and other Asian ethnic groups. It is a traditional time of reunion and celebration with family and friends. While Lunar New Year day is recognized as an official day of commemoration in New York, public schools that have a considerable proportion of students that do not attend school due to this cultural holiday do not close for that day. It may be impractical to keep the public schools open in Asian communities when there is a significant number of students and instructors who take the day off. In Queens County, Asians presently comprise nearly 23 percent of the total 2.2 million Queens residents. In some areas of the state, such as, Flushing, Queens the Asian population represents over 57 percent of the total population. This legislation would require boards of education or trustees to make a determination relating to closing school on religious or cultural holidays, such as Lunar New Year day, to avoid considerable absenteeism and the waste of educational resources.

**PRIOR LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:**

This is a new bill.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

To be determined.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:**

This act shall take effect immediately.