



NYSSMA®

A State Unit of NAFME, National Association for Music Education

The 48th Annual Joseph R. Sugar NYSSMA Day in Albany Information for Legislators – Monday, March 1, 2021

Who we are: The 5,000 members of the New York State School Music Assn.

Who we represent: 1.8 million NY school music students and the households, teachers and businesses supporting their music education.

Why we are here: To advocate for our students, families and members.

We want you to know that:

1) The New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA), its membership of over 5,000 music educators and corporate sponsors, the almost 2 million NY State school music students and their parents sincerely thank you for all the support you have shown the music programs in your districts during these unprecedented times. We know that all legislators have had many communications with constituents who voiced concerns about the vital music programs in their schools and the breakdown of live performance in the professional music world. We also thank Governor Cuomo for the supportive comments about the music industry and music education in his State of the State address and for the concrete plans he proposed to help an industry that provides almost 10% of State budget revenues.

As we seek ways to open schools in a safe, science-based manner, NYSSMA needs legislators to be aware that Music programs across the state have been one of the educational areas hardest hit by the Pandemic and its prerequisite safety regulations. We know that music has a positive influence on the social and emotional well-being of children. Many programs around the state have been suspended altogether with entire music staffs being excessed. Other schools do their best while hard working, creative, music educators use many techniques and virtual platforms to keep their programs viable and exciting. The introduction of a 12-foot distance recommendation for music ensemble rehearsals as opposed to the 6 feet approved for other disciplines has made teaching in many schools impossible due to space restrictions. We are at a point where our beginning instrumental programs are basically 2 years behind in introductory study. Inclusion of special masks and bell coverings to the rules on rehearsal safety created an extra financial responsibility that many districts could not provide.

Since the Governor was clear of his support for music and music education in the State of the State address, our NYSSMA President, Dr. David Brown, Superintendent of DeRuyter Central Schools, has written a letter to the Governor, SED Commissioner, and State Health Department proposing the creation of a task force to look at the science in order to safely reduce the 12-foot recommendation to the existing 6-foot recommendation along with looking into other areas that would help music programs get to a "new normal." At this time, many schools are not providing a music experience in accordance with state standards because students simply cannot fit in a room within the duality of these restrictions. All we are asking is that a task force be created to look at the science, giving school districts a chance to decide whether they can expand on presently limited music programs. NYSSMA hopes you will support such a plan as it develops.

2) NYSSMA understands that, even with help from the proposed federal Covid 19 Relief Bill, budget challenges for the foreseeable future will be immensely difficult to craft. Please keep education and music education high on the list as budget money is allocated, with an eye (Cont.Pg.2)

Alan Orloff, Government Relations Chairperson, 17 Cobb Ct., Huntington, NY 11743

Phone: 631.365.3763 • GRC@nyssma.org • www.nyssma.org

NYSSMA® is a registered trademark of the New York State School Music Association



NYSSMA®

A State Unit of NAfME, National Association for Music Education

towards helping our schools rebound from the negative effects of the pandemic while supporting our financially hard-hit communities in their efforts to restore excellence to their local school systems.

3) It is hard to believe that only one year ago NYSSMA members were personally visiting legislators in the Capitol to advocate for music education and begin the month-long celebration of Music in our Schools Month (MIOSM), an event created 48 years ago in our state which is now celebrated in every state and Europe. More than 3,000 music students performed in the Capitol over the course of March 2020. At that time, we asked for your support for "Same As" Bills S5770/A9660. These bills were designed to move Music and Arts from Regulatory to Statutory subjects, giving them "Stand Alone" status as established by the Federal standards in ESSA and the New York State Standards for the Arts. They were extremely well received, but only a week later the Capitol closed as Covid 19 raged in our state. These bills are now being re-worked and will hopefully be re-introduced with new identifying numbers for the current Legislative session. We ask you to watch for these bills and to support their historic premise, either by signing on in sponsorship or in support. These "Same As" bills would make New York the first state to follow the Federal Standards for Arts Education established in ESSA, the Every Student Succeeds Act that is now the education law of the nation.

Alan Orloff, Government Relations Chairperson, 17 Cobb Ct., Huntington, NY 11743

Phone: 631.365.3763 • GRC@nyssma.org • www.nyssma.org

NYSSMA® is a registered trademark of the New York State School Music Association