

# NY STATE EDUCATION POWER GRAB ON HOLD

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a statement by New York State education officials on some proposed reforms:

New York State Department of Education has put on ice its proposal to allow public schools to exercise control over private schools. We fought this power grab on two occasions in the past two years and will continue to do so again if it is resurrected. We are delighted to learn that the vast majority of those who responded to the invitation to make a public response to this initiative were opposed to the plan.

On April 5, 2018, I wrote a letter to the Commissioner of Education at the New York State Education Department, Mary Elia, expressing the concerns of the Catholic League. Though the proximate cause for allowing a partial takeover of private schools was alleged curriculum deficiencies in some yeshivas operated by Orthodox Jews, there were passages in the guidelines that actually allowed the state to exercise more control of parochial schools than yeshivas.

We not only protested this idea, we rejected the entire scheme. At stake is the religious autonomy of Catholic and Jewish schools. "To be sure, there are legitimate educational matters that should concern the state," I said, "regardless of whether a school is private non-sectarian, religious, or public. There are also legitimate church and state issues involved when it comes to the public policing of religious education."

On August 28, 2019, I issued another statement, this time encouraging our allies to contact the New York State Education Department; we provided the email contact information. The

notion that a local public school, which may be a failed institution, would be given oversight over an academically excellent Catholic school is something right out of the Twilight Zone.

Albany education officials should have hit the “stop button,” not the “pause button.” This proposal was killed in the court of public opinion and was certain to be killed in the courts as well. It should be withdrawn and buried.

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