



**The New York State Association of
Small City School Districts, Inc.**

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NEWS RELEASE

NOTED CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER JOINS LAWSUIT TO SECURE EDUCATION RIGHTS OF STUDENTS IN NY SMALL CITIES

Trial Set for December over Severe Deficits in Small Cities Schools

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Albany, New York—Education Law Center, led by noted civil rights lawyer David Sciarra, has joined the legal team in *Miasto et al., v. New York*, a lawsuit pending in Albany challenging severe deficits in essential resources for students in 8 “small cities” school districts under the New York Constitution.

“We are extremely pleased to announce Education Law Center (ELC) has agreed to serve as co-counsel representing our school children in this important case,” said Robert Biggerstaff, Executive Director of the New York State Association of Small City School Districts, which coordinates the litigation, known as the “Small Cities” case. “Mr. Sciarra and ELC will add substantial expertise gained from their ground-breaking successes for New Jersey students in the *Abbott v. Burke* litigation and from participation and support in school finance litigation in states across the nation.”

The plaintiffs in the Small Cities case are students from Jamestown, Kingston, Mount Vernon, Newburgh, Niagara Falls, Port Jervis, Poughkeepsie and Utica. These districts serve 55,000 students in communities with 330,000 residents. All districts have student poverty rates ranging from 50% to 94%, with an average of 72%. All have low property wealth and income and have experienced substantial shortfalls and cuts in school funding in recent years.

The Small Cities plaintiffs are prepared to demonstrate their schools lack the resources – teachers, support staff, interventions for struggling students and other services – determined by the New York Court of Appeals to be essential for a “meaningful high school education.” As a result, the students claim the State is violating their right to a sound basic education, as guaranteed by the New York Constitution.

“We are honored to represent the Small Cities students in this case,” said Mr. Sciarra. “They have waited long enough for the essential resources they need to succeed in school. We simply cannot stand idly by while the State continues to violate the constitutional right to a sound basic education in some of New York’s poorest communities.”

Judge McNamara will preside over the trial of the case, and has set December 8 for the start of the trial.

ELC will join William Reynolds of the law firm of Bond, Schoeneck and King in Albany, lead counsel on the Small Cities legal team.

Mr. Sciarra is among the nation’s leading civil rights lawyers and serves as lead counsel in the landmark *Abbott* education rights case. He has led the ELC legal team in securing precedent setting rulings requiring adequate school funding, school construction and comprehensive school reform, along with the nation’s first high court ruling establishing the right of three- and four-year-olds to high quality early education. The *Abbott* rulings on education rights are considered to be the most important in the United States since *Brown v. Board of Education*.

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