

# Local Agudah Meetings Engage Yeshiva Officials While Highlighting Recent Accomplishments and Future Goals

As representatives of Agudath Israel of America ready themselves for the upcoming legislative session in Albany to advocate for the needs of the Jewish community, multiple meetings held throughout the New York area gave yeshiva administrators and directors an overview of last year's legislative accomplishments benefitting non-public schools while keeping them apprised of upcoming goals.

Approximately 100 school representatives took part in the gatherings that were held over the past few weeks at Hamaspiik in Boro Park, Masores Bais Yaakov in Flatbush, Bnos Bais Yaakov in Far Rockaway and Cheder D'Monsey in Rockland County and were organized by Rabbi Yeruchim Silber, director of New York government relations for the Agudah. In addition to discussing previous legislative successes and agenda items for the upcoming session, the meetings also served as an invaluable opportunity to listen to the suggestions and concerns of those who run our educational institutions.

"Most of our focus in Albany is on yeshiva aid," explained Rabbi Silber. "With the legislative season coming on, it is important for us to get an idea of what the needs are in our schools."

Last year alone Agudah advocacy brought about massive changes to reimbursements for state-mandated immunizations, as well as increasing funding for both school security and the Smart

Schools Bond Act. Among the items on this year's agenda are tuition relief, paying off existing debt from the state's Comprehensive Attendance Policy program, upping security funding to yeshivas and preserving the educational integrity of schools in the face of recent attacks on the yeshiva system.

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Rabbi Yosef Gelman, dean of Masores Bais Yaakov, said that he found the meeting to be well planned and well attended.

"It presented a lot of information regarding legislative initiatives that the Agudah is doing and gave a glimpse into the very vital work that the Agudah does, both publicly and behind the scenes, to benefit yeshivas and their students," said Rabbi Gelman.

In addition to its work in the legislature, the Agudah's Yeshiva Services division stays in close contact with schools throughout the year, putting out numerous emails and phone calls and hosting informative events such as webinars, workshops and this year's very successful Yeshiva Expo. The Agudah's continued efforts have not been lost on Rabbi Baruch Rothman, director of institutional advancement at Yeshiva Darchei Torah.

"For many years the Agudah has been taking care of yeshivas and making sure that our interests are represented in Albany," said Rabbi Rothman. "Meetings like this let us know what is going on earlier in the cycle so that we can give our input and be prepared for upcoming developments."

The meetings were very productive said Rabbi Silber, who noted that he has gotten extremely positive feedback from those in attendance.

"It is all about letting yeshivas know that we are there for them," said Rabbi Silber. "Nothing can be more important than

listening to people on the ground and hearing what their needs are.”