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### CBS2 Exclusive: State Education Commissioner Warns Hempstead School Board To Shape Up Or Risk Dismissal

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Filed Under: Carolyn Gusoff, Dr. Shimon Waronker, Hempstead School Board, Local TV, New York State Department Of Education

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**HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. (CBSNewYork)** — An incredibly sad story got worse Thursday night for children in the Hempstead School District on Long Island.

The fight over control is robbing the students of a decent education, an official says. CBS2 has learned it has gotten so bad that the top New York state educator is in Hempstead with a warning for the board – get your act together, or else.

As CBS2’s Carolyn Gusoff reported exclusively Thursday, state Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia came down from Albany to meet face-to-face privately with every [Hempstead School Board](#) trustee.

Her message is that the fractured board must follow a highly critical action plan by a state monitor.

“That board has to come up with this plan very, very shortly,” said New York State Board of Regents member Roger Tilles. “If they don’t, the commissioner does have some power.”

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Power, Tilles said, to oust school board members and appoint her own school board if fixes are not made fast.

“It’s really a tragic situation,” Tilles said. “For 13 years, I’ve watched wonderful kids go down the tubes and go into a chasm.”

The chasm includes chaotic school board meetings and anemic graduation rates. The state-appointed monitor blames dysfunctional governance for years – a revolving door of leaders that turned yet again this week when the board suspended a new superintendent brought in by a previous board – [Dr. Shimon Waronker](#) – had flagged law enforcement about [suspected corruption](#).

“The fact is it violates my contract. It violates the law,” Waronker said.

Opponents gave Waronker a taunting sendoff, singing Ray Charles’ “Hit the Road Jack” while one of them played piano.

Supporters said his ouster is a symptom of a bigger problem – patronage jobs keeping the status quo alive.

“If you want progress, you must have change. People don’t want change. They want to be where they are,” said Fred Brewington, Waronker’s attorney. “And the real question is why? Why is it so comfortable for you to be in this place where more than 50 percent of the children in the high school are not going to graduate?”

State elected officials now say they must help save the district.

“We’ll be speaking together as how we can work together,” said state Assemblyman Edward Ra (R-Franklin Square). “To, you know, what is continuing to go on there is alarming.”

Lawmakers said an outright state takeover of the district is highly unlikely, but that elected school leaders will not remain in charge if they continue to fail students.

The state monitor found that one third of the senior class at Hempstead High School has dropped out since September. The Hempstead School Board meets again on Thursday night.

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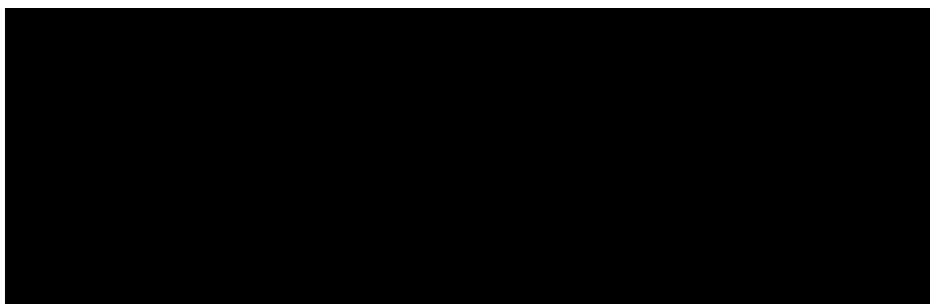
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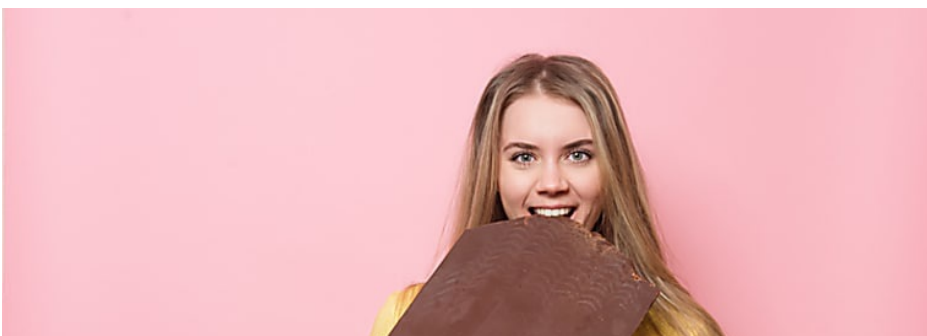
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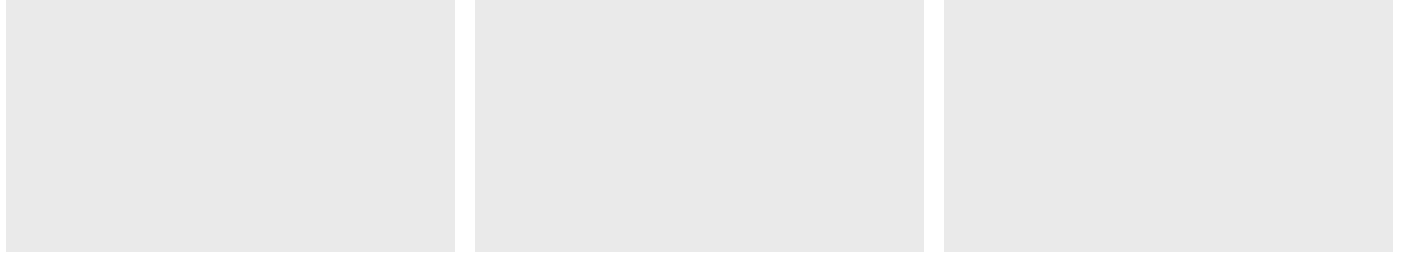


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