



M. TERESA RUIZ, NJ State Senator, Senate Education Committee Chair

M. Teresa Ruiz was elected to the New Jersey State Senate in 2007 as the first Puerto Rican and re-elected in 2011, 2013 and 2017. She was elected by her colleagues to serve as Senate President Pro Tempore in 2018 and 2020 and is the first Latina to hold the position. The senator authored a law that overhauled the state's teacher tenure statute. Signed in 2012, the act put standards in place requiring tenure to be earned and maintained through ongoing performance measurements, and ensure educators get the support they need when deficiencies are identified.

A fearless advocate for equity and justice Senator Ruiz has championed for the rights, protections and advancement of families and children and has led statewide efforts to address the inequalities that persist in our society.

Senator Ruiz was a prime sponsor of the 2013 law making undocumented students eligible for in-state tuition rates at New Jersey public colleges and universities. She also sponsored the 2017 law requiring the Commissioner of Education to develop guidelines for school districts to ensure a supportive and nondiscriminatory environment for transgender students.

In 2016, Senator Ruiz authored a law which requires college loans granted by the state to be forgiven in the event of a student borrower's death. She also sponsored a law to limit the suspension and expulsion of students in pre-school through second grade, and another to provide stronger academic support to students with reading difficulty.

Senator Ruiz sponsored the law creating the New Jersey Advisory Council on End-of-Life Care to ensure the special needs of those approaching the end of life are met. She sponsored a 2009 law prohibiting individuals from purchasing more than one handgun a month.

The senator has spearheaded efforts to move New Jersey toward universal preschool, and championed the inclusion of \$25 million in the 2018 budget to expand pre-k to more students.

Senator Ruiz received a bachelor's degree from Drew University. She is vice chair of the Essex County Democratic Party and is deputy chief of staff to Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. She served as a delegate at the Democratic National Conventions in 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020.

In 2010, Senator Ruiz was awarded an Aspen Institute-Rodel Fellowship, and was one of 24 individuals identified by the program's leadership as America's emerging political leaders with reputations for intellect, thoughtfulness, and a commitment to civil dialogue. Senator Ruiz is also a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School's Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program.