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**PRESS RELEASE**

**NYS PTA Receives National PTA Outstanding State PTA Advocacy Award for COVID-19 Pandemic and Racial Justice and Equity Advocacy Efforts**

**New York State PTA Student Wins Outstanding Youth Advocate of the Year Award**

February 3, 2021 (Albany) – NYS PTA is excited to share that National PTA has just honored NYS PTA with the Outstanding State PTA Advocacy Award for their COVID-19 Pandemic and Racial Justice and Equity Advocacy efforts.

Dana Platin, NYS PTA President, offered, “We are so honored and humbled to receive this award from National PTA for our work this past year in supporting our students, families, educators and schools through the COVID-19 pandemic. PTAs across our state and country have done all they can each day to Shine a Light on Every Child. NYS PTA provided weekly webinars, food service programs, and assisted families with SNAP and WIC applications. We offered direct outreach to units and members, and we created new webpages, new family engagement resources and newsletters. Additionally, we provided new parent and family resources, new educator and school resources, and new virtual family engagement and training events. We were fortunate to have had representation from our leadership on the Governor’s Reopening Council and SED’s Reopening Taskforce, where we were able to give guidance and input. And on top of all of that, we utilized social media and email strategies, and provided translations where needed. The list of what NYS PTA did to support families goes on and on, and I have never been prouder of our Association.”

From the National PTA Press Release: “New York State PTA demonstrated outstanding dedication and leadership through their nimble and highly effective response to the many hardships wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. New York State PTA advocated on a multitude of issues relating to the pandemic and impacting students and families, while also forging new partnerships to ensure effective advocacy. Through a sustained and comprehensive communication, marketing and outreach strategy, New York State PTA members and non-members received multiple touchpoints and messages highlighting their advocacy efforts, detailing available resources, offering education on relevant topics, and targeting underserved

communities and families. The advocacy plan was crafted to be holistic and serve all types of PTA units and members, including rural and urban communities, families with varying income levels, students with disabilities and their families, LGBTQ+ students, educators and their families, ELL students and families, documented and undocumented immigrant families, and other populations.”

In more exciting news, the Outstanding Youth Advocate of the Year Award has been awarded to Bailey Proctor of Elmsford PTSA in Westchester County.

“Bailey represents exactly what our amazing NYS students do each day to become an advocate, to support their fellow students and community, and to make a difference,” offered Kyle Belokopitsky, NYS PTA Executive Director. “We are so proud of Bailey’s work in her school and community, and know that her work will sustain and continue in Elmsford School District as she continues to grow as an advocate and change-maker. Further, we are humbled at National PTA’s recognition of the work our amazing volunteers and staff have accomplished this past year. There is nothing more important than supporting children, families, and educators. It is our mission to Shine a Light on Every Child, making every child’s potential a reality. This prestigious award goes to every NYS PTA member across our state for the work they do EVERY day to support ALL children.”

From National PTA: “Through leadership, dedication and creativity, Bailey Proctor raised awareness of social justice and education equity policies in the Elmsford Union Free School District. Proctor created a student activism club called R.E.A.C.H., which stands for Raiders for Education, Action and Change, and helped organize a Black Lives Matter rally for the Elmsford community. She is a member of the student-only District Equity Team, and serves as the 2020-2021 student representative for Elmsford PTSA. Thanks to her leadership, the PTSA has seen an increase in student membership. Proctor’s determination has inspired Elmsford PTSA members to hold difficult conversations about the practices that stifle the community’s growth. She has modeled and empowered her peers and community to speak on the issues that impact student life.”

The goals of the NYS PTA COVID-19 Support Initiative included:

- To provide NYS PTA members and non-member parents and families relevant and timely information on COVID-19;
- To provide support to unit leaders and schools during the school building closure and re-opening process;
- To advocate for safe, reasonable comprehensive reopening plans especially in underserved communities;
- To ensure all students, especially students with disabilities and ELL, have access to education while providing support to families coping with remote instruction;
- To reduce the digital divide especially in low-wealth and/or impoverished communities and to ensure tech-equity and access for all children, families, educators and schools;

- To provide communications in varying methods, including in translation services and direct outreach to specific unique populations and cohorts of students, families, educators and schools;
- To develop and mobilize an advocacy special committee alongside our region and council leaderships, to proactively reach out to families and leaders on how to effectively reach those without electronic capabilities; and
- To implement a direct outreach program and facilitate school engagement in hard to reach populations.

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The NYS Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc. (NYS PTA) is honored to represent the families of our 2.6 million school children and our nearly 250,000 member parents, families, and educators. It is our mission to make every child's potential a reality and support EVERY child with ONE voice. [www.nyspta.org](http://www.nyspta.org)