

News From Senator Shirley K. Turner



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SENATOR TURNER TARGETS LITERACY CRISIS

Backpack Giveaway Donates School Supplies to Trenton Students in Time for the School Year

TRENTON – Citing deep concerns about poor literacy skills that are linked to academic, social, and income disparities, Senator Shirley K. Turner (D – Mercer/Hunterdon) is on a mission to provide Trenton youth with greater access to the tools they need to learn and develop a positive attitude toward reading and education.

In partnership with the Classic Razor Sharp Barber Shop, Senator Turner distributed new backpacks and school supplies to families in need in Trenton on Monday, August 29. Along with the backpacks, Senator Turner gave out free books collected from her Annual Community Book Drive, as well as coupons to receive a free haircut on September 5 from the Classic Razor Sharp Barber Shop located on Center Street in Trenton.

“Parents are essential to the learning process. This giveaway will help to alleviate some of the stress of the school shopping list and will make it easier for parents to participate in their child’s education,” said Senator Turner. “I am also looking forward to partnering with Razor Sharp and helping them to promote their 18th Annual Back to School Haircut Initiative. Together, we are helping students and their families start the school year with their best foot forward.”

In the City of Trenton, more than 76 percent of third grade students perform below proficiency levels in Language Arts. At the beginning of the summer, Senator Turner held her second book fair and distributed hundreds of free books to Trenton children to help stave off summer reading loss.

“Reading is fundamental to learning and education,” said Senator Turner. “Unfortunately, since four public libraries closed and only one remains open in the City, limited access continues to hinder young readers. Three-quarters of students who are poor readers in third grade remain poor readers in high school and are far more likely to drop out than their peers. As a consequence, many are also more likely to struggle with unemployment, gangs, and criminal activity, facing a life trapped in the criminal justice system.”

Senator Turner is striving to help break this cycle by addressing the reading problems early in a child's education. When the Senate returns next month, Senator Turner will introduce a bill to establish a pilot program in the Department of Education which will provide supplemental reading instruction to students in grades K through 3. She is also sponsoring legislation to require the Commissioner of Education to declare an educational state of emergency for certain districts with low proficiency rates in language arts and literacy and provide for corrective measures.

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