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Varsity Letter Bill Co-Sponsored by Oroho Passes Out of Senate Committee

By TAPINTO SPARTA STAFF
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NEWTON, NJ - Legislation co-sponsored by Senator Steve Oroho (R-Sussex, Warren, Morris) to extend opportunities to earn varsity letters to high school students that participate in competitive activities other than athletics was advanced by the Senate Education Committee.

“Students who are part of science or music clubs take so much pride in competing for their school,” Senator Oroho said. “It’s time that our high schools recognize these hard-working kids and their important contributions to school spirit.”

Oroho signed on as a co-sponsor of the bill after meeting with the Newton Robotics

team this summer at the Sussex County Fair, according to information published by his office.

“This is a huge step for not only robotics teams, but for all other non-athletic extracurricular activities as well,” Liam Oakes, Co-Captain of Aperature, Newton’s Robotics team said. “It tells students who are not athletes that they are recognized for the hard work that they do, and that their dedication and efforts will not be forgotten by themselves or the school.”

Oroho, together with Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno, US Congressman Scott Garrett, Newton Board of Education President Stella Dunn met with the students in their newly dedicated permanent space at the fair.

Newton High School’s Robotics Teams, Aperature invited the dignitaries to once again promote their message seeking legislative support to gain varsity status for students participating in competitive academic activities. Aperature team members do have the opportunity to earn a varsity letter from Newton High School. They are trying to get that opportunity for all New Jersey students.

The bill, S-2398, allows school districts to adopt policies allowing high school students who compete in any school-sponsored, interscholastic extracurricular activities to earn a varsity letter awarded by the district. Senators Christopher “Kip” Bateman (R-Mercer, Middlesex, Hunterdon, Somerset) and Diane Allen (R-Burlington) are the prime sponsors of the legislation.

Oroho said the companion bill A-3879 was also passed through the Assembly committee. “Both bills now need to be posted for a vote before the full houses of the General Assembly and the Senate before they can go to the governor for final approval. Hopefully that will happen over the next few months,” Oroho said.

The team builds the robots in order to learn more about science and engineering. They are a FIRST team competing and earning recognition at the highest levels throughout the state. The team members coordinate all aspects of the competition requirements, including fundraising, public relations and maintaining a journal of cataloging all of their work.

“These students have to train and prepare for their competitions in the same way student-athletes have to prepare for their games,” Oroho said. “The fact they’re focusing academic competitions rather than sports doesn’t mean they are any less deserving of a varsity letter.”