Advocates for Children of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Sarah Part, *Communications & Policy Associate* · 212-822-9517 · spart@afcnyc.org
Kim Sweet, *Executive Director* · 212-822-9514 · ksweet@afcnyc.org
Dawn Yuster, *School Justice Project Director* · 212-822-9542 · dyuster@afcnyc.org

Advocates for Children of New York Commends the City Council's Leadership on Amendments to the Student Safety Act

September 29, 2015 (NEW YORK CITY) — Advocates for Children of New York applauds the City Council's efforts to make New York City a model for the rest of the country in publicly reporting school discipline and police department activity in public schools. The City Council is expected to vote tomorrow to pass amendments to the Student Safety Act that require the New York City Department of Education (DOE) and New York City Police Department (NYPD) to report more robust information related to student suspensions, arrests, and summonses in school and post the information on their respective websites.

"We are grateful to the City Council for its leadership on this important bill, which will bring to light data necessary to the public understanding of how students are disciplined and arrested in the city's schools," said Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York. "We have represented students in suspension proceedings for decades and have long noted troubling racial disparities and other patterns that called for changes in policy and practice. This law allows schools, government agencies, and the public to see what's happening and come together to make changes where they are desperately needed."

The amendments to the Student Safety Act expand upon the types of student exclusion from the classroom that must be reported. In addition to reporting on suspensions and expulsions, the DOE will now have to provide data on teacher removals, which are used to exclude students from the classroom for up to four days, and students transported by emergency medical services from school to a hospital. The amendments also limit the DOE's ability to redact data when reporting the number of teacher removals, suspensions, and expulsions, without sacrificing student privacy. While the Student Safety Act that was passed in 2011 mandated that the NYPD report on arrests made and summonses issued in schools only if they were administered by school safety agents and police officers employed by the School Safety Division, the amendments require reporting on all arrests made and summonses issued by the NYPD on school property, including those by regular patrol and precinct officers. The amendments also require the NYPD to report the use of handcuffing and other restraints on students and the use of metal detectors in city schools.

"During our work on the ground with families, too often we have seen students suspended from school instead of receiving interventions that teach social-emotional skills, hold them accountable for what they did wrong, and help repair harm. We've also seen students transported from school to a hospital using emergency medical services when their behavior could have been de-escalated and managed in school," said Dawn Yuster, School Justice Project Director at Advocates for Children of New York. "After passage of the amendments, we look forward to continuing to work with the City Council to determine where the City should make strategic investments in funds and resources to provide students the appropriate support services and interventions they need to stay and succeed in school."

About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)
Since its founding in 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has been protecting the education-related needs of children most at risk of academic failure or school-based discrimination due to such factors as poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, language barriers, immigration status, homelessness, or involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice system. AFC's mission is to promote access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. AFC uses integrated strategies to advance systemic reform, empower families and communities, and advocate for the educational rights of individual students.

###