



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

**Testimony to be Delivered to the
Education Committee of the
New York City Council**

**Re: Significant School Changes (Closures, Reconfigurations and Community
Notification)
and Res. No. 1263, Proposed Res. No. 1395-A, & Res. No. 1906**

**By: Kim Sweet, Advocates for Children of New York
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Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to submit feedback on these proposed resolutions.

My name is Kim Sweet, and I am the Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 40 years, Advocates for Children has been speaking out for the most vulnerable children in this city's school system -- children living in poverty, children with disabilities, children learning English, children involved in the foster care or juvenile justice systems, and children who are homeless.

We believe that **all** of New York City's children deserve excellent public schools. Too many of our city's schools continue to fail our students. We need ambitious and creative school reform strategies to raise the quality of education for all



children in the system, including those students who present the greatest challenges.

We have raised the question many times over the years as to whether the aggressive school closure policies of the Bloomberg Administration are benefiting students with disabilities, students who are homeless, and English Language Learners. We also have expressed concern about whether students left in schools that are closing receive the educational opportunities to which they are entitled. These questions and concerns have not yet been answered. For this reason, we support Proposed Res. No. 1395-A, calling for a one-year moratorium on school closings in order to study more thoroughly their impact on students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students who are homeless.

We also support Res. No. 1906, which calls for further specification of procedures in Chancellor's Regulation A-190 for providing notice to affected parents of significant changes in school utilization that are being proposed. Decisions to close, re-configure, or co-locate a school have profound consequences for all members of that school's community; we are in favor of making the provisions that ensure notice to all affected parties as strong as possible.



Finally, we are testifying in opposition to Res. No. 1263, to the extent that it calls upon the State Legislature to give the Community Education Councils a veto over proposed co-locations. When it comes to some of the most disadvantaged students in the school system, such as students who are overage and under-credited or students who are involved in the justice system, we desperately need more schools and programs that can meet their needs. As we have seen, siting these types of schools and programs tends to spark community concern and opposition. To give CEC's the power to block the co-location of these schools or programs would effectively prevent them from opening.

To be sure, the CEC's need more of a say in co-location decisions, and steps should be taken to ensure that communities share the distribution of specialized programs equitably. But if all the CEC's are able to reject a school they believe to be undesirable, there will be nowhere for that school – and the children within it – to go.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.