



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

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## Press Release

### For Immediate Release

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## Statement of Advocates for Children of New York in Response to the New York State Education Department's Proposal for Expanding Graduation Pathways

**January 11, 2016 (NEW YORK CITY)** — Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York, issued the following statement in response to the proposal for expanding graduation pathways for all students discussed at today's Board of Regents meeting:

New York State's emphasis on five high-stakes standardized exit exams continues to be an unnecessary barrier to high school graduation for students who have otherwise mastered the State's learning standards and are college or career ready. These five exams are not the only way, and often not the best way, to assess whether students have met high standards. Although high school graduation rates have improved slightly over the past year, 22 percent of students across New York State are not graduating with a high school diploma within four years. The percentage of students who are not graduating in New York City is even higher, with 33 percent not graduating within four years. Vulnerable student populations also continue to trail behind their peers, with 62 percent of New York City students with disabilities and 64 percent of the City's English Language Learners not graduating within four years.

We are pleased that the New York State Board of Regents and State Education Department have taken steps today to move away from the current one-size-fits-all approach to graduation requirements. We support expanding the eligibility criteria for Regents exam appeals and making the Career and Development Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential available to all students, in lieu of one of the five Regents exams. We also strongly urge the Board of Regents and State Education Department to move forward quickly with the development of performance-based assessments, which support a diversity of learning styles and goals while also maintaining a high standard of learning.

### **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.

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