



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony to be submitted to the New York State Senate Education Committee

Re: Mayoral Control

May 19, 2016

Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments regarding mayoral control of New York City public schools. As an organization that has monitored the City's school system before and after mayoral control went into effect, we strongly support a long-term extension of mayoral control.

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For more than 40 years, AFC has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. Every year, we help thousands of parents navigate the New York City school system. Over the past year, we provided education advocacy for individual children in more than 7,800 matters. We also conducted know-your-rights workshops and webinars attended by almost 10,000 people and developed materials to help parents and professionals advocate on behalf of students. We use the knowledge we acquire in our on-the-ground work with families to identify systemic barriers and promote reform to improve educational outcomes through policy advocacy and, when necessary, litigation.

As a watchdog agency working to protect the rights of students, we know that there is substantial room for improvement in our public schools. But we also know that mayoral control has led to an infusion of attention and resources dedicated to education that has produced results for our City's students and schools.

By various indicators, we have seen improvement in student outcomes under mayoral control. For example, the four-year graduation rate increased steadily over the past decade from under 50 percent in 2005 to 70 percent for the first time this past year. For students with disabilities, the four-year graduation rate rose from under 20 percent in 2005 to over 40 percent this past year. Under mayoral control, we have seen the City focus more attention and funding on making changes to the public school system and supporting students to improve such education outcomes.



Several recent initiatives demonstrate the importance of mayoral control. For example, AFC has long advocated for the expansion of high-quality early childhood education programs given the research showing the positive impact that these programs have on the educational outcomes of children from low-income backgrounds. Mayor de Blasio prioritized the expansion of pre-kindergarten, and we were grateful that the State Legislature funded this expansion. Implementing the rapid expansion of this program required the City to marshal the resources of City Hall as well as various city agencies including the Department of Education, the Administration for Children's Services, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Homeless Services, the Department of Buildings, and the Fire Department. Mayoral control was key to facilitating this coordination. Similarly, the State and City have prioritized the expansion of community schools, requiring the City to coordinate efforts between the Department of Education and other city agencies.

While we have not agreed with every decision that Mayor Bloomberg or Mayor de Blasio has made about our City's public schools, we have recognized the importance of empowering the mayor, as the City's top elected leader, to take responsibility for improving the state of public education.

The question about mayoral control should focus not on who is mayor but on how we build an education system that best serves children. Mayoral control in New York City has a track record of producing results for students. We urge the State Legislature to approve a long-term extension of mayoral control.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Sweet". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kim Sweet
Executive Director