



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

January 17, 2017

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senate  
478 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

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Dear Senator Schumer and Senator Gillibrand:

On behalf of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), we urge you to oppose the confirmation of Betsy DeVos as the next United States Secretary of Education. We are deeply troubled by Ms. DeVos's lack of experience with public education and her record of advocating to steer funding to private school vouchers instead of strengthening the public schools that serve the vast majority of children in this nation.

For more than 40 years, AFC has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success. We work on behalf of children who are at greatest risk for school-based discrimination or academic failure due to poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems.

There is no question that significant work is needed to improve education for these groups of students. We believe that addressing these barriers on the national level requires a leader with extensive public education experience and a rock-solid record of working to strengthen the public schools that these students attend. Regrettably, Ms. DeVos lacks these qualifications. Ms. DeVos's education efforts have focused on advocating to divert funding from public schools to private school vouchers and tax credits and opposing oversight and accountability of publicly funded charter schools. In our experience, the federal government has helped strengthen education by allocating targeted funding to help public schools serve students from low-income



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backgrounds, students with disabilities, and students who are homeless, among other groups of students, and by passing and enforcing laws that protect the educational rights of these students. Reducing public school funding and accountability will take our nation in the wrong direction and will disproportionately harm the students who need the most support to succeed in school.

We appreciate that Ms. DeVos has stated that she wants to ensure that students get an excellent education regardless of their zip code. However, diverting public school funding and rolling back accountability measures are not the ways to achieve this vision. We urge you to oppose her confirmation.

Respectfully,

Kim Sweet  
Executive Director