



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

June 19, 2017

New York State Assembly
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Assembly Member:

On behalf of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), we are writing to express our strong support for a long-term extension of mayoral control. We urge you to approve the extension of mayoral control as a stand-alone bill and not tie it to other issues. We are dismayed to see some legislators treating mayoral control as a political game used to exact other policy change that is irrelevant to mayoral control. Now is the time for the Legislature to unite and extend mayoral control for multiple years.

For more than 45 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. As a watchdog agency working to protect the rights of students, we know that there is substantial room for improvement in our public schools. However, 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 72.6 percent last 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 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 prekindergarten, 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

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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. The Legislature should not make New York City's students pawns in a political game and should not hold mayoral control hostage. There is a time to debate other education issues, including changes to charter schools. However, as the deadline for extending mayoral control approaches quickly, we urge the State Legislature to approve a long-term extension of mayoral control as a stand-alone bill that is not tied to other changes in education policy.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kim Sweet".

Kim Sweet
Executive Director