

Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma

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November 14, 2018

BY EMAIL

Commissioner MaryEllen Elia
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Chancellor Betty A. Rosa and Members of the Board of Regents
Regents Office, State Education Building
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Re: Support and Recommendations for a State Commission on Graduation Requirements

Dear Commissioner Elia, Chancellor Rosa and Members of the Board of Regents:

On behalf of the Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma, I am writing to urge you to convene a State Commission to examine New York's graduation requirement, as first proposed last year by the members of the Board of Regents. The Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma is a state-wide coalition with more than 70 members, including advocates, educators, parents and youth, representing a broad cross-section of students, including students with disabilities, multilingual learners, overage and under-credited students and economically disadvantaged students. Since 2007, our coalition has advocated for students who have met State Standards and are college- or career-ready but struggle to show what they know on high-stakes exit exams.

New York State is one of only 12 states that still require exit exams for graduation. This year, as State Education Department officials and the Board of Regents discussed changes to the Superintendent Determination, we were pleased to hear the Commissioner and Regents repeatedly acknowledge the urgency of eliminating Regents exams as a barrier to graduation for the many students with disabilities who can demonstrate mastery of State Standards through a variety of other measures but are unable to pass these exams. However, Regents exams are a barrier to graduation not just for students with IEPs, but for many more college- and career-ready students with and without disabilities. These students also need meaningful pathways to graduation that do not rely on high-stakes exit exams. Moreover, although the expanded Superintendent Determination option opened the door to post-secondary opportunities for many students with IEPs, it further complicated an already complex and confusing array of State graduation requirements.

Given the importance and complexity of these issues, we urge you to convene a State Commission to examine New York's graduation requirements and to propose meaningful, rigorous, and equitable graduation pathways for all students. This Commission, first proposed by members of the Board of Regents at the October 2017 Regents meeting, should be tasked with identifying the skills and knowledge necessary for college, career, and civic engagement, and with proposing meaningful, rigorous ways to demonstrate mastery of these standards that do not rely on five high-stakes tests. Attached please find our coalition's detailed list of recommendations for the Commission. We look forward to working with you to move this Commission forward.

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If you have questions or would like to discuss any of our goals or recommendations further, please contact me at agrant@advocatesforchildren.org or (212) 822-9548.

Sincerely,



Ashley Grant
Coalition Coordinator

Advocates for Children of New York • Alliance for Quality Education • ARISE Coalition • Asperger Syndrome & High Functioning Autism Association • David C. Bloomfield, Esq., Professor of Educational Leadership, Law & Policy, Brooklyn College and The CUNY Graduate Center • Bronx Independent Living Services • Brooklyn Defender Services • Brooklyn Center for the Disabled • Business Teachers Association of New York State • Campaign for Tomorrow's Workforce • Capital Region Refugee Roundtable • Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York • Citizens' Committee for Children of New York • Lisa Finnerty Coggi, Parent/Advocate • Community Service Society • Council for a Strong America • Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies • Valerie DeClara, Parent • Della DeKay JD, EdD • Max Donatelli, Family Advocate • Eskolta School Research and Design • Irja Estrella, Parent • Families Together in New York State • Ann Marie Fitzpatrick, Parent • Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project • Jennifer Ghidiu, Big Picture Learning • Michael Godino, Advocate • Good Shepherd Services • Roberta Grogan, Parent/Advocate • Lorri Gumanow, Parent/Special Educator • Meghan Healy • Shelley Hubal, Parent • INCLUDEnyc • Muronji Inman-McCraw • Internationals Network for Public Schools • Lawyers for Children, Inc. • Learning Disabilities Association of New York State • Jill Lewis-Flood, Parent/PIP Member • Long Island Advocacy Center • Long Island Communities of Practice • Chris McNell, Special Education Supervisor/Principal • Diana Medina Mendez, Parent • Mark Anthony Mendez • Mental Health Association of New York City • Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools • Namita Modasra • New York Council of Administrators of Special Education • New York Immigration Coalition • New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation • New York Performance Standards Consortium • New York State Association for Bilingual Education • New York State Coalition of 853 Schools • New York State Community of Practice on Family, School and Community Collaboration • New York State Disabilities Advocacy Association and Network • New York State Independent Living Council, Inc. (NYSILC) • New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (NYTESOL) • NY Stop Grad HST • NYU Metro Center • Regina Paleau, Parent • Parent to Parent New York, Inc. • Evelyn Perez, Parent • Catherine Phillips-Russ, Baker Victory Services • Sharon Poole, Education for Everyone Consultant • Queens Community House • Lynn Russo, Parent • SCO Family of Services • Tracey Shannon, Parent • Bruce A. Shields, PhD, Associate Professor of Education, Daemen College • Sinergia Metropolitan Parent Center • Starbridge • Amy Ming Tsai, Parent/Advocate for Special Education • United We Stand • Christian Villenas, PhD • Marcia Vogel, Parent/Advocate • YOUTH POWER!

Enclosure: Diploma Coalition Overview and Policy Goals – 11.2018

cc: Senior Deputy Commissioner for Education Policy Jhone Ebert
Deputy Commissioner Angelica Infante-Green