



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

News Release

For Immediate Release

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June 24, 2020 (NEW YORK CITY) — Today, Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement in response to [new State guidance](#) strongly encouraging school districts to provide over-age high school students the opportunity to return to school next year to finish meeting graduation requirements and to prepare for their transition out of high school:

We thank the Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) for strongly encouraging school districts to allow 21-year-old students to return for the 2020-21 school year to finish meeting graduation requirements and to receive the transition supports they need to move on to post-secondary opportunities. The guidance is an important first step towards ensuring that COVID-19 does not cause any student to lose their chance to earn a high school diploma or miss out on the support they need to transition out of high school.

We strongly urge the New York City Department of Education and districts across New York State to follow NYSED's recommendation and provide all young people aging out without a diploma the opportunity to complete their education and prepare for life after high school. Districts should reach out to 21-year-old students and their families right away to let them know they can return. We agree with NYSED that "it would be a cruel injustice to pull the rug out from under these young adults who have worked so hard for so long," and with the school year quickly coming to an end, this small group of students must know they will not be left behind.

About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)

Since 1971, Advocates for Children of New York 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 who are at greatest risk for failure or discrimination in school because of their 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. AFC uses four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation for families of students; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and compel needed reform.