

**For Immediate Release**

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## More than 1,200 New Yorkers Call for a New Approach to Graduation Requirements

**December 6, 2022 (NEW YORK, NY)** -- Today, the [Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma](#) released a petition signed by more than 1,200 New Yorkers, calling on State leaders to permanently decouple Regents exams from graduation requirements, a practice which currently makes New York State an outlier in the US. New York is one of only a small number of states—11 before the pandemic with the number having decreased further since then—that require students to pass exit exams in order to earn a diploma. Educators, advocates, elected officials, parents, and students alike are ready to rethink Regents Exams.

When the New York State Education Department and the Board of Regents cancelled Regents exams due to COVID-19, the State provided an opportunity for students who demonstrated mastery in their courses and earned their required credits to receive a diploma without taking high-stakes tests. As the petition notes, this temporary change in policy showed that another way is possible: we do not have to go back to a pre-pandemic system that was keeping far too many students from graduating.

As a comprehensive [review of research](#) recently released by the State Education Department noted, most studies have found that exit exams serve as a barrier to high school graduation and increase dropout rates, particularly for students of color, without leading to more positive student outcomes. Furthermore, decoupling exams from graduation requirements does not mean lowering standards; there is no evidence showing that these exams increase achievement or employment outcomes for young adults leaving high school, but they do serve to push students on the margins away from rigorous coursework.

This Fall, the State convened a Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures to develop recommendations on measures of learning and achievement that could better serve NYS students. “We are excited about this opportunity for the State to expand upon the steps they have already taken to deemphasize high-stakes testing during the pandemic,” said Juliet Eisenstein, staff attorney on the Postsecondary Readiness Project at Advocates for Children of New York, which leads the Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma.

However, the State does not need to wait to eliminate the passing of Regents exams as a condition for high school graduation, and they should do so as soon as possible.

“While the Commission’s work moves forward, the State should take action now to ensure that students who have passed all their courses are able to graduate from high school and pursue their postsecondary goals,” said Eisenstein.

The petition is available at:

[www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/on\\_page/decoupling\\_regents\\_petition\\_12.5.2022.pdf](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/on_page/decoupling_regents_petition_12.5.2022.pdf)