



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

News Release

**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:** Isabella Rieke, Senior Communications Manager • 646-871-6739 • [irieke@afcnyc.org](mailto:irieke@afcnyc.org)

## **AFC Response to the Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures**

**November 13, 2023 (NEW YORK CITY)** — Today, Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement in response to the release of the [recommendations](#) of the New York State Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures:

We thank the Board of Regents and the State Education Department (SED) for their commitment to creating a more equitable graduation framework for New York's students and for providing AFC staff the opportunity to serve as a member of the Blue Ribbon Commission. While we are still reviewing the full report, we are pleased to see recommendations that New York modify diploma assessment requirements to allow students to demonstrate competence in multiple ways through options that meet the needs of all learners, promote performance-based assessments (PBAs), and ensure access to Career and Technical Education (CTE). As these recommendations move forward, it will be essential to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, have meaningful access to the full range of options and pathways being advanced.

Reducing or modifying exit exam requirements and allowing students to demonstrate competence in multiple ways would be an important step in the right direction—and we continue to advocate for New York to follow the lead of states around the nation and fully decouple Regents exams from graduation requirements. As SED's own [literature review](#) concluded, exit exams like the Regents are "not positively associated with any college or career outcomes," and New York is one of only eight states that still maintains such a policy. There is [no evidence](#) that exit exams increase academic rigor or boost student learning, and they *have* been shown to increase drop-out rates, particularly for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. At AFC, we have seen this outcome firsthand: we have worked with far too many students who had the deck stacked against them, yet persevered and completed their coursework and were prepared to move on to post-secondary life—only to be blocked from a high school diploma because of a single high-stakes exam.

We look forward to working with the Board of Regents and SED to build upon these recommendations and revise New York's graduation framework to meet the needs of the current era.

**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.