



**Testimony for the Joint Legislative Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2026
Executive Budget Proposal: Elementary and Secondary Education**

January 29, 2025

On behalf of the Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget: Elementary and Secondary Education. Our statewide coalition includes more than 80 organizations and families who have come together to urge the creation of multiple pathways to a diploma in New York State, each of which holds all students to high expectations, provides them with quality instruction, and opens doors to career and post-secondary education opportunities.

We urge you to ensure that the final budget includes funding to support implementation of the New York State Education Department's (NYSED's) work to create a more equitable graduation framework.

In November, NYSED unveiled NY Inspires, its plan for implementing recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures. We have long advocated for multiple pathways to a high school diploma that do not require students to pass multiple high-stakes exams. The NY Inspires plan reflects an important step toward increasing equity in our school system and opening doors to higher education and careers by creating opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that are appropriately suited for them. This work is especially important for students who are often overlooked – students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged students.

Such an undertaking requires additional resources and capacity. We support the Board of Regents' proposal to include \$2.3 million to assist with these efforts. This investment would allow NYSED to fund a project coordinator to organize training and engagement opportunities, as well as two new staff to support the work of incorporating the new, more flexible requirements into districts' curriculum. The funding would also allow NYSED to consult with experts in the development of standards.

Accordingly, we urge you to **include \$2.3 million in the budget, as requested by the Board of Regents, to implement the proposed changes to graduation measures.**

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact May DePierro, Policy Associate at Advocates for Children of New York, at 212-822-9531 or mdepierro@advocatesforchildren.org.