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****Release****

Parents Protest Regents Vote To Potentially Deny More Than 300,000 Students Necessary Academic Support

Higher Standards Plus Less Resources and Academic Supports Don't Add Up

(Albany, NY) More than 75 parents, students and community members from across the state protested outside of the State Education Building today as the New York State Board of Regents voted for a waiver proposal that altered an existing regulation requiring local school districts to provide necessary academic support, known as Academic Intervention Services (AIS), to enable students who are not proficient to successfully meet state standards. The protest was organized by the Alliance for Quality Education, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Citizen Action of New York, New York City Coalition for Educational Justice, and Education Voters of New York.

The state Board of Regents recently raised standards on state tests after a study by a Harvard University professor concluded that the tests were too easy; the new testing standards are designed to measure whether students are on track for career readiness and on-time graduation. As a result of the new testing standards, the number of students who are not proficient has skyrocketed by more than 300,000 this year. The Regent's vote to alter the existing policy will deprive hundreds of thousands of students of the Academic Intervention Services to get students on track to meet state standards and to graduate.

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“Today’s Regent’s vote undercuts the ability of students to graduate and go on to college and successful careers. The Regents are placing responsibility for their vote on the Governor and the Legislature because of the horrific \$1.4b cut to our state’s education budget. Next year, the new governor and legislature will have to decide whether or not students will continue to be denied the academic supports they need to meet state standards,” said **Billy Easton, Alliance for Quality Education Executive Director**.

“While we applaud the State Education Department and the Board of Regents for recalibrating test scores so that they are better aligned with college-ready standards, we don't understand how they would then turn around and take away services from our children, who are most affected,” said **Coalition for Educational Justice parent leader Portia Armstrong**. “Our children and families are finding out that they while they thought they were on target for college, they are not and instead of being met with supports to get them there, we are planning to tell them you are on your own. How does this make sense?”

“New York State is making the wrong choices. Today the Regents are deciding that hundreds of thousands of kids across the state will be left with reading and math skills below grade level, putting them on a path toward dropping out instead of going to college. Why? Because NYS is unwilling to ask millionaires and multi-millionaires to pay their fair share of taxes, so now we can’t afford to educate our students,” said **Karen Scharff, Citizen Action of New York Executive Director**.

“The Campaign for Fiscal Equity fought and won every student’s constitutional right to a sound basic education not so that the large majority of academically challenged students in New York would finish school with a meaningless diploma or nothing at all,” said **Geri Palast, Campaign for Fiscal Equity Executive Director**. “New York’s highest court held that school resources must be adequate to provide a meaningful high school education. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) have concentrated resources on those who need it most. During times of limited resources and ever rising academic standards, services to these students must be prioritized not cut. This short-sighted approach is likely to leave New York with a school system in which the majority of low performing students suffer not only from poor test scores but who will end up with no high school diploma and reduced life prospects.”

"A real sign of political courage in a time of budget cuts and decreasing revenues is to stand steadfast in our commitments to provide students the support they need to reach their full potential. In tough economy times, we cannot simply choose to roll back critical programs like Academic Intervention Services that provide students with the extra help they need. If we are going to prepare New York students to compete in a rapidly growing competitive 21st century workforce, we must provide every child with the tools needed to succeed," said **Glynda Carr, Education Voters of New York Executive Director**.

AIS can include tutoring, one-on-one or small group instruction, or academic supports tailored around individual student needs. The Regents devastating vote will free districts from their requirement to provide these essential academic supports to those students who do not pass this year’s state math and English language arts tests but would have passed by last year’s standards—the same standards that the Regents threw out because they meant students were not at grade level.

Last week the groups held simultaneous statewide events in addition to local meetings with Regent members calling for a rejection of the proposal.

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