



Interim Commissioner Betty Rosa  
New York State Education Department  
89 Washington Street  
Albany, New York 12234

September 29, 2020

Dear Commissioner Rosa:

It will come to no surprise to you that we are writing, urging you to take every action possible to suspend testing for 2020-21 school year. The focus for the 2020-21 school year should be on healing and learning, not on high stakes testing, given everything our communities have gone and continue to go through with the heightened uncertainty that COVID-19 brought in our lives.

This year has been tumultuous for everyone, administrators, teachers, parents, and our young people. COVID forced us to stay home, away from loved ones, away from the comfort that daily routines and structure brings to us. And yet, that was not the reality that many students and their families experienced. COVID illuminated even more that having a home is a privilege. Having a routine is a privilege. Having parents who are able to work from home is a privilege. And yet, somehow, our communities persevered. Even through the sickness and loss, through the countless incidence of violence and police brutality that killed so many Black men and women, through the uprising that ensued in many communities, through the countless hours spent by parents in communication forums to try to understand what is happening to their children's schools, over the last six months it is crystal clear that focusing on high stakes testing and such punitive accountability measures will cause more harm than good.

We urge you to apply for a waiver to suspend all testing this year. We believe that both the state tests required under Every Student Succeeds Act and the testing required by New York State, locally chosen or Regents, must be suspended so this year is dedicated to healing and learning as best as possible. Surely, you are as concerned as we are about the looming devastating cuts Governor Cuomo is slowly implementing. Those cuts are forcing high need/low income school districts to make deep cuts to their personnel and programming, leaving once more Black, Brown, low income, disabled and immigrant students to bear the brunt of the state's budget deficit and COVID impact. Testing will only add to this harm and will only serve to label these schools who already have less than others as failures, and the students scoring lower on the tests as "not as smart," or "hard working," or "committed to education" as their white peers. Please apply for the waiver from the US Department of Education, and please suspend all testing in New York.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Quality Education

Black Educators United

Children's Defense Fund- NY

Citizen Action of New York

Class Size Matters

Coalition for Asian American Families and Children

Committee for Hispanic Children and Families

Community Education Council 16

Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York

Council of School Supervisors and Administrators

El Puente

Empire State Indivisible

Eskolta School Research and Design

Families Together in New York State

Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project

Girls for Gender Equity

Internationals Network

Local Progress

Long Island Opt Out

Make the Road NY

Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE)

New York City Coalition for Education Justice

New York Civil Liberties Union

New York Communities for Change

New York Council of Administrators of Special Education

New York Immigration Coalition

NY BATS

NYC Opt Out

NYS Allies for Public Education

PRESS NYC

Regina Paleau, parent member of the Diploma Coalition

Replications, Inc.

Village Independent Democrats

CC: Members of the Board of Regents