



**State Senate Committee on Education  
Joint Public Hearing on Mayoral Control**

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State Director**

Good Morning Senator Liu and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Jacquelyn Martell. I am the State Director for Education Reform Now New York as well as a resident of Assembly District 30 and proud graduate of NYC public schools and Columbia University. Today I am testifying for the extension of Mayoral Control as proposed in Governor Hochul's budget so that our schools may be led to a more equitable future under Mayor Adams' vision.

When control of the New York City School district - the largest and most diverse in the country- was first granted to Mayor Bloomberg in 2002, corruption was rife amongst many community school boards. Mayor Bloomberg transformed the system - increasing school choice for families, raising pay for teachers, increasing transparency of school data, and offering bonuses to principals who monitored student achievement. The success of this model of governance is limited only by the vision of its Mayor. Mayor Adams has made it clear that bringing NYC schools back from the pandemic better than ever before is a top priority of his administration. This is evidenced by his selection for Chancellor in David Banks and his personal mission to improve the experience of students with Dyslexia so that they can have equitable access to opportunity and resources.

While causation for improvements in a school district can be difficult to tie directly to the Mayor's oversight- it is clear that this model has benefits for schools and students alike. According to a [report](#) by the Center for American Progress, New York City is one of 5 cities under a form of Mayoral control that saw a decrease in achievement gaps and our district was recognized for its governance model leading to 'significant positive effects on both fourth- and eighth-grade student achievement.' This growth included improvements among Black and Latinx students- ranging from 1-3% annually (or over 2,000 students each year). This study also revealed that districts utilizing mayoral control 'tend to focus on teachers and use resources more effectively on average than those under elected boards'.

There is still more to be done so we must leverage the ability of a Mayoral Control to be adapted and reinvented at levels that are simply unheard of in any other school governance model. In 2009, when Mayoral control of schools was extended by a majority vote of 47 to 8 it was also adapted to meet the needs of parents and school leaders including more power given to superintendents and the establishment of a parent training institute.

As our students, school staff, and families continue to navigate the coronavirus pandemic, it is vital that we adapt this governance model to its current context and ensure that it meets the needs of those most affected. No system is perfect, but the assets of this one can be used to achieve equity for students without leaving them to wait on the sidelines of the political battle required to create another model of governance.

Those who oppose Mayoral Control accuse the system of lacking accountability. Yet, if families are unsatisfied with how their schools are doing they need only vote one person out. Mayoral Control is highly democratic and offers increased levels of power to the voter. If we still had elected school boards, change would take longer and require multiple elections to transform leadership. Granting the Mayor control of the district also allows a citywide vision which leads to a more relevant and wider application of policy. When held up against numerous board members guarding their seats by appealing to localized constituencies, it is blatantly clear which model helps the most students.

We agree that the current model can be improved and believe our district can learn many lessons from Washington DC which has seen the largest transformation in an urban school district since shifting to mayoral control in 2007. Currently, New York's Independent Budget Office oversees DOE spending but more evaluation is needed to ensure the efficacy of policy on student outcomes. In 2018, the DC Council passed legislation to establish the [Education Collaborative Research Practice Partnership](#) within the Urban Institute. This RPP allows an objective measurement and data collection process. With a third party tracking and transparently reporting progress, the Mayor's office is unable to present a partial or misleading narrative. A school district must be first accountable to its students and we believe adding an objective body to monitor and evaluate the effects of Mayoral policies on student achievement would strengthen the system and help parents feel assured that this model is serving their children best.