

# **Kimberly Watkins**

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New York State Senate Hearing on Mayoral Control

March 4, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the issue of public school governance in New York City. I am a public school parent in District 3, former President of Community Education Council, District 3, and a strident activist for common sense checks and balances in state and local government. I urge the New York State Senate to end Mayoral Control of New York City schools as the law currently structures it. Specifically:

1. The governance of New York City's public school system must cease being a bargaining chip among the Governor, Mayor and Legislative leaders in the budget process. Discourse over this issue deserves its rightful place in the legislative session, not hidden behind closed doors where it has remained since 2002.
2. We must elect the body which serves as a check on executive leadership at the DOE. You will hear (or have heard) countless examples of decision making and spending that violate basic ground rules in a democratic society. The sheer growth of these problematic issues over the last two decades should be evidence enough that this system does NOT work.
3. For six years, I led one of the most active groups of parents leaders in Manhattan. Throughout this period, the end of, or greater reforms for, Mayoral Control has been advocated. While mostly at the parent leadership level, countless advocacy groups have agreed that the current structure has not improved efficiency, outcomes or equity. Furthermore, the pandemic magnified the need for a shift in thinking, and since the start of COVID19, many legislators have joined the effort in calling for change.

The sunset of the current Mayoral Control law in June 2022 presents New York with an unprecedented opportunity to evaluate other configurations, to implement legislative changes that equitably support public school families. Please don't allow the Governor and Mayor to block this conversation again. New York City's public school students, families and staff deserve a voice.

Sincerely,

Kimberly (Kim) Watkins  
she/her/hers