

Council Member: Elvy Dieguez
Vice-President/BPA: Victor Iroh
Council Member: Tiffany James
Treasurer: Terrance Johnson



President/IEP Representative: NeQuan C. McLean
Recording Secretary: Marta Torres
Council Member: Zita Vasilisinova

*NY State Senate Standing Committees on Education and NYC Education, and the NYS Assembly
Committee on Education*

Joint Public Hearing on School Governance and Mayoral Accountability

March 4th, 2022

Greetings Chair John Liu, Chair Shelley Mayer, Chair Michael Benedetto, and Members of the NY State Senate Standing Committees on Education and New York City Education, and the NYS Assembly Committee on Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on school governance today. My name is NeQuan C. McLean. I am the President of the Community Education Council for District 16 (CEC 16), one of the 36 education councils across the City of New York tasked with advocating for the school communities that we represent. The CEC 16 is located in the area of Bedford-Stuyvesant, in Brooklyn, New York. Bedford-Stuyvesant has been a cultural center for Brooklyn's Black population for decades. In this community, Black people have been able to thrive because of political advocacy, like the creation of NY's 12th Congressional District (which elected the first Black woman to Congress – Shirley Chisolm) and economic efforts, like the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation's mortgage assistant program, which encouraged African American home-ownership. Of equal importance was the movement led by former Assembly and Council Member Al Vann to establish community control of our schools. Bedford Stuyvesant is a community whose consciousness has largely been defined by the collective agency and intellectual identity of its Black population.

I am here today in representation of the CEC 16 to oppose the continuation of Mayoral Control over education in the City of New York. At least 82% of students in the NYC Department of Education belong to a racial minority, most of them Black and brown, and to economically disadvantaged households. Distinct from the other 733 school districts in the State of New York not only in demographic composition, New York City is the only district in which the ultimate decisions that affect 1 million children in the school system and their families rest with one individual: the mayor.

A system in which all the authority lies in the hands of one person makes irrelevant the concept of accountability. Mayoral control sought to correct or alleviate corruption in the former system of school boards that were elected directly by the communities that they represented. Time and time again, however, we have had to grapple with the effects of failed policies that have left us scrambling to fend for ourselves with the limited resources available to us. Not only are we deprived of our rights as stakeholders to have a direct say in the education system of our future generations, but not even city legislators have the ability to influence the direction of education in our city based on our real needs. Under mayoral control, the NYC Department of Education

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has remained an opaque agency under which it has been very difficult to track spending or monitor contracting, and with the cities' investigative authorities working under the direction of the mayor, there are insufficient mechanisms to ensure the integrity of decision-making.

Mayoral control places our largest and most important municipal institution in a state of perpetual instability with wholesale regime change every 4 to 8 years. Adopting a model that entails systemic re-organization every 4 years under different leaders and different priorities creates organizational instability, and ultimately, makes the public school system less effective.

It is my ask, the ask of the CEC 16, and the ask of the parent community that we represent, that Mayoral Control be removed from the legislative budget and that a door be opened to allow a separate process to amend the NYS Education Law in order to permit the formation of a school governance structure that truly represents the needs of all constituent communities, considering to:

- Oppose a 4-year extension proposed by the Governor
- Establish a task force to develop an alternative, democratic school governance system through an inclusive, participatory process
- Amend sections 2590-b, c, e, and g of the NYS Education Law to create more checks and balances in the interim

Among these, please see our Resolution No. 012422a calling for a more democratic school governance system [here](#) for additional recommendations of the CEC 16.

Citywide and Community Education Councils have very little power in making policy decisions that affect their constituents. Mayoral control of our school system has disenfranchised parents, who should be collaborators in developing policies and initiatives. The law needs significant amendments.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share this testimony.

In Partnership,

NeQuan C. McLean
President