

# TESTIMONY

## NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

### Joint Public Hearing on School Governance Reform and Mayoral Accountability of the New York City School District



March 4, 2022

### THE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Mark Cannizzaro, President


40 Rector Street  
New York, New York 10006  
(212)823-2020

[www.csa-nyc.org](http://www.csa-nyc.org)

Greetings Chair Mayer, Chair Benedetto, Chair Liu and Honorable Members of the Legislature. My name is Mark Cannizzaro and I am proud to serve as President of the New York City Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA).

CSA is the labor union representing 6,000 in-service and 10,000 retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Education Administrators and Supervisors working in New York City public schools as well as nine charter schools. CSA is also the collective bargaining unit for 200 Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors who work in city-subsidized Early Childhood Education Centers.

We want to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the extension of mayoral control of the public schools in New York City. This issue is of profound importance to CSA's members. The experience and wisdom of our members are available to you in determining how our school system is led in the future.



CSA BELIEVES THAT REFORMS  
TO THE CURRENT MAYORAL  
CONTROL STATUTE ARE  
NOW NECESSARY.

As we all know, the state law that gave control over the New York City schools to the City's mayor will expire in 2022. Based on our observations since mayoral control was first enacted, we believe our school system would benefit from the following:

- An external review of mayoral governance of New York City's public schools;
- Changes to the composition of the Board of Education (known as the Panel for Educational Policy/PEP).
- Expansion of the authority of the Community Education Councils (CECs).

**External Review of School Governance** – The sunset of the school governance statute provides the Legislature the opportunity to evaluate the success of mayoral control, and address the problems that have arisen since it was last authorized.

CSA and other stakeholders have closely observed the functionality of mayoral control since it was first approved, and particularly so during the COVID-19 pandemic. From our perspective, mayoral control has resulted in ongoing dysfunction over the last several years.

MAYORAL CONTROL HAS NOT RESULTED IN THE STRONG AND CONSISTENT LEADERSHIP THAT LAWMAKERS FIRST SOUGHT.

The manifestations of the current authority warrant scrutiny and should be of concern to policymakers.

CSA proposes extension of mayoral control for a period of three years, during which an independent review of mayoral control would also be undertaken. An independent entity would be selected to elicit public input, research other governance models and issue its findings. Thereafter, a joint task force appointed by the Legislature and Governor would recommend how leadership of New York City's public schools is constructed going forward. In developing its recommendations for policymakers, the task force should consider the following:

- Continuance of mayoral control in a form similar to current law;
- Continuance of mayoral control with significant modifications;
- Transitioning mayoral control to a new governance structure.

CSA also recommends the following changes to the current system:

**Composition of the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP)** – CSA recommends revisions to the composition of the PEP, as follows:

- PEP members appointed to staggered three-year terms. Members can only be removed for cause and by a majority vote of the panel.
- Six members appointed by the mayor, and the retention of the current requirement that two of the mayor's voting appointees be parents of students who have attended public schools or a student who has attended public school within the last 2 years.

- Five members appointed by each of the borough presidents.
- One member appointed by the City Council. This change would give the city council access to all information, a vote on policy, and a venue to voice their concerns. This change, along with the PEP's current budgetary authority and ability to conduct hearings, will help sustain checks and balances in the system.
- One member appointed by the Community Education Council Presidents. Similar to the City Council appointee, this would allow for CEC input and voice on the panel.

CSA also supports the continuation of other PEP authority within the current mayoral control statute, relating to approval of proposed regulations, the capital plan and operating funds, allocation of revenues to community school districts, procurement policies, contract awards, school closures and utilization changes.

**Expansion of the authority of the Citywide Education Councils** – CSA recommends strengthening the role and authority of Community Education Councils (CEC), as follows:

- CECs should advise and consent on the appointment of the community Superintendent, on the development of district budgets, district safety plans, and district policy.
- CECs should approve any proposed charter school in their community school district. Their vote (either for or against the establishment of such a school) could be reversed by a majority vote of the central board.
- CECs should approve the closing and /or consolidation of schools in their district. Their vote (either for or against the closing of a school) could be reversed by a majority vote of the central board.

For our schools to be successful, parents and other community members must be actively engaged and involved. The best way to promote this involvement is by encouraging genuine empowerment at every level. That means enabling CEC's to exercise real decision-making authority on matters important to each community school district, rather than being marginalized with merely token advisory input.

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In conclusion, strong connections between schools, parents and the community can mean the difference between the success and failure of a school. As we emerge from the pandemic, our schools must engage the strengths, enthusiasm, and resources of students, parents and the entire school community to meet the physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs of all our kids.

Mayoral control is central to this progress, and we thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committees today.

Mark Cannizzaro  
President