

Joint Public Hearing examining school governance and the overall effectiveness of mayoral control of the New York City School District.

Friday March 4, 2022

My name is Yiatin Chu. For the past three years, I have been an active and vocal education advocate in NYC and particularly for the Asian American community. I was an elected member of CEC1 last term and currently serve on my dual language school's SLT. I co-founded PLACE NYC in 2019 and serve as co-president of the organization. *I am submitting the following testimony as a parent, and not on behalf of the organizations I am affiliated with.*

As an Asian parent in NYC, the past three years with former Mayor de Blasio and his chancellors have been demoralizing. His rhetoric and policies targeted the few bright spots in NYC public education: our specialized high schools and gifted and talented programs, and even honors and APs. His proposal to get rid of the SHSAT followed by anti-Asian comments by both Carranza and Porter will not be forgotten by Asian families.

As a parent who got a front row look at possible alternatives to mayoral control, the grass is not greener on the other side. Parent leadership structures like the CECs and CPAC are often platforms for race essentialists and ideologues who put their virtue signaling above the best interest of public school families. However, the most common issue of these parent councils is simply a lack of time and competence; many councils have unfilled vacancies. Therefore any alternative governance that gives more power to these parent councils would be dysfunctional and harmful to our public school system.

As parents, we've seen the devastating impact of the teacher's union in the past two years, using their political power to keep schools closed. A decentralized governance would mean effectively ceding control to the UFT and we just can't let that happen. The Teachers Union does not put families and students first. The past two years have made that crystal clear.

Asian families rely on public schools more than any other community. With the destruction of quality options in district schools, more Asian families are turning to charter schools. We saw Asian student enrollment increase at charter schools in the past 5 years. I'm encouraged by Mayor Adams's non-combative stance on school choice and if things align in Albany, we can lift the cap so that even low income immigrant Asian families can access school choice. I support the extension of mayoral control and giving Mayor Adams a 2-yr term to start. I'd like to see him stand up to dissenting voices on city council and implement his promise of challenging and supporting all kids in our public schools, from those that need special services to ones who need acceleration to be at their full potential.

For accountability, I'd like to see the Panel for Education Policy:

1. Acknowledge and attempt to address all CEC resolutions which represent parent council concerns and demands.
2. Require all contracts to include the number of students served by the contract and the cost/expense per student.
3. Include representation from citywide high school council, in addition to the current CEC representative which was elected by the 32 district CEC's presidents, and do not represent the high school grades.

To strengthen and streamline parent voice:

- Community Education Councils which switched to direct election this past term should be restructured to remove non-parents. Political appointees who are far removed from the day to day lives of k-12 parents have pursued ideological agendas in direct contrast to parent wishes via appointment to Citywide and district councils. There is no shortage of activated, motivated parents eager to serve on parent bodies.
- All PEP members should be current parents.
- All Borough President (BP) Appointees should be current parent/guardians on the grounds that each BP gets only one shot at appointing someone and it must be someone currently with kids in our schools.
- The Mayor may appoint a mix of current parents/guardians and others, on the condition that the “others” have sent kids through four years of HS, three years of MS and at least two years of Elementary School in NYC Public (District or Charter) schools. The grounds for this is that the Mayor should bring the benefit of as wide a range of perspectives as possible to PEP. At least four (half) of the Mayor’s appointees should be current parents.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yiatin Chu