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Thank you for the opportunity to address the New York State Senate Committee on Education regarding the Regents Reform Agenda of New York State. I am Diana Bowers, the Superintendent of the Hamilton Central School District in Central New York State. We are a small college town of average wealth and passionate people.

In my 33 years as an educator, 24 of which have been in an administrative position, I have never felt compelled to make a public address regarding the state of education in New York. Today, I could not live with myself if I did not share my thinking, my concerns and the distress of my school community.

I come to you today as the eyes and the ears of this esteemed group. I am here to tell you what is happening throughout New York State and the magnitude of the situation as it exists in schools today.

I am here as the voice of the children in my charge. The Class of 2026, the children who will encounter a world we can not imagine; a world, which will require innovative, resilient, imaginative leaders who are presently in our schools forming the foundation from which the rest of their education will be based. We have an enormous responsibility to these children. We need to ensure that their needs are met.

The Reform Agenda was created with this in mind. The basis of the Reform Agenda is quantitative in nature. It strives to create students that are “College and Career Ready.” Much of the baseline data that drives this reform was extrapolated backwards from the successful college graduates of today and the level of accomplishment they achieved as

they were rising through their educational years. It includes two bold, visionary components, the Common Core Learning Standards and the APPR.

The Common Core took into consideration the attributes and strategies that would teach students to learn how to learn, become metacognitive in their thinking and analysis, and create an entrepreneurial mindset that will be necessary for their success.

The APPR was designed to ensure that teachers will instruct our students well. Districts were asked to provide the training and support necessary for research-based pedagogy to excite, entice and enhance the education in the classroom. It was designed as a tool that would help instructional leaders explicitly communicate the requirements within their districts and measure that these standards were met.

The Reform Agenda, the Common Core, and the APPR, are all great ideas and lofty goals, that were well intended, were initially met with excitement and enthusiasm, and had the potential to strengthen education throughout the state.

So, what happened?

Simply put, the implementation was too much, too fast, too soon. The collaborative process that began quickly turned into unbridled edicts that were coupled with haste, a lack of clear vision and a rate of change that has created a storm like none-other in education. It punishes people into compliance and has created a fear environment that has stifled ingenuity, love of learning, and teachable moments in the classroom. The Common Core Modules have further strained an extraordinarily strained system, created lock-step education that results from the rigidity of the lessons, and is creating tension at home and in the school due to confusion and lack of teacher preparation (due to the rate

of change). Moreover, teachers are living in fear that they will fail and be publically humiliated by ratings when they are released to parents. These ratings have already proven themselves to be flawed when we correlate the ratings with teacher performance. The qualitative measures of the Reform Agenda are disastrous. Our students are losing their love of learning. They are trapped in scripted lesson that in many cases, lack relevance and are illogically placed based on the age and cognition.

Great teachers are counting down to retirement, tears are flowing on a regular basis, and masterful teachers are questioning their effectiveness. When these apprehensions and fears are shared with the leaders at the State Education Department, they dismiss the warnings, forge ahead without considering the implications, and destroy the likelihood of success.

Unfortunately we now have a Reform Movement where leaders are leading and few, are following. It saddens me as an educator, a parent, and a superintendent. We implore you to be the voice of the children and put some wisdom back in the process. Stand up for the children of New York State, they need you.