



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Todd Kaminsky

## Sen. Kaminsky, Assm. Mayer Urge Board Of Regents To Provide NY Students With Diploma Option

SENATOR KAMINSKY May 13, 2016

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**(Albany, New York)** – In advance of the Board of Regents meeting on Monday, Senator Todd Kaminsky and the Chair of the Assembly Education Subcommittee on Students with Special Needs, Shelley Mayer, sent a letter to New York State Education Department Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, urging immediate action by the Board of Regents to provide greater diploma options for this year's class of students. Kaminsky and Mayer voiced their concern that a large number of students are at risk of being denied a recognizable high school diploma simply because they are non-traditional learners or have special needs.

The Class of 2015 was the first class victimized by discriminatory diploma standards in New York, and unfairly denied recognized high school diplomas," said Senator Kaminsky. "Enough is enough. These students are talented individuals and they deserve to be celebrated with the same distinction and honor that all their classmates receive. One size does not fit all, and just because a student may not pass five Regents exams does not mean they should be condemned to second class status. This injustice must be rectified immediately so that in June, we can honor their potential by providing them and the Class of 2015 with what they truly deserve: a recognizable high school diploma."

“While we work to develop more comprehensive solutions, the Board of Regents must take immediate action to address the problem confronting the class of 2015,” said Assemblymember Mayer. “We need to do more to develop appropriate diploma options for the diverse students in our schools. Too many students with valuable skills, who have the potential to make tremendous contributions to our workforce and communities, are struggling to develop to their fullest potential.”

Without Regents Competency Tests (RCTs), which were eliminated in 2011, and despite some safety net options, students are required to pass five Regents exams in order to earn a high school diploma. Many students, mainly non-traditional learners and those with special needs, have tremendous difficulties in passing these tests to meet the state requirements, leaving them without a recognized high school diploma. Monday is the Board’s last chance to rule on whether to provide an alternative recognized diploma option for this year's graduates that have encountered difficulties in passing Regents exams.

A copy of the letter sent to Commissioner Elia is attached.