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NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

Gianaris, Mamdani, Barnwell, Nolan, Cabán, Won, Public School Families Call On Mayor, Department Of Education To Reverse Dismissal Of Dr. Phil Composto As District 30 Superintendent

MICHAEL GIANARIS May 13, 2022

| ISSUE: **DR. COMPOSTO, DISTRICT 30, QUEENS, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, NYC SCHOOLS**



ASTORIA – Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris, Assembly Members Zohran Mamdani, Cathy Nolan, and Brian Barnwell, Council Members Tiffany Cabán and Julie Won were joined by School District 30 families and community leaders to call on Mayor Eric Adams and Schools Chancellor David Banks to retain Dr. Philip Composto as Superintendent of School District 30. The western Queens community learned this week that Dr. Composto was asked by the Department of Education to leave his position without any public input or notice, or even a reason. The elected officials and community members held a press conference at Van Alst Playground, outside PS 171 in Astoria. [Photos](#) and [video](#)

are available.

Dr. Composto has successfully led District 30 - one of the most diverse school districts in the world - for the last 14 years and is a 40-plus year veteran of New York City schools, with much of that spent in western Queens. He has served as a teacher, trainer, principal and district administrator in various capacities. Additionally, he worked to implement a college tuition pilot program across District 30 before the program was expanded citywide by Mayor de Blasio and Mayor Adams.

“Dr. Composto being dismissed without explanation is unacceptable to the neighborhoods he's faithfully served,” said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. “I am calling on the Mayor and Chancellor to reverse this bad decision, which completely ignored the wishes of the community most affected by it.”

Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani said “In a district as diverse as ours, I have come to expect a broad spectrums of opinions when it comes to any one local issue. Yet, with Dr. Composto, I hear the same thing from principals, teachers, parents, and students across Astoria: appreciation. Dr. Composto has served our children in one capacity or another for 40 years. He has been a critical source of support for our entire district throughout the pandemic, not to mention the decades prior. And yet, Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks’ response to that has been to summarily inform him that his application to continue leading our district was not even worthy of consideration in their final round of interviews. Not only do I and countless other Astorians vehemently oppose this decision, we find the manner in which it was done to be truly disrespectful. Dr. Composto often asks: “how does this benefit all of our children?” This decision by Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks simply does not.”

Assembly Member Brian Barnwell said, “Dr. Composto is the type of leader our schools need and for him to be dismissed without cause or notice to the community is just wrong. The Mayor and DOE owe the people of western Queens an explanation and must right this wrong now.”

Assembly Member Cathy Nolan said, “I have worked with Dr. Composto for many years and have seen the impact of his service in schools throughout District 30. He has always worked tirelessly to connect with and uplift students, teachers, and school administrators and has created an environment of engagement that centers dignity and respect. Mayoral control was not meant to exclude the voices of parents and this situation is an example of how important authentic community engagement is to the success of our students.”

Council Member Tiffany Cabán said, “Dr. Composto is an incredible asset to the District 30 school community and his four decades of service to our children and families has not gone unnoticed. Since news broke that he was asked to leave, there has been an outpouring of support from every corner of this district from parents, principals, school staff, labor leaders, and community members. I stand with them in

demanding that Dr. Composto be allowed to continue serving as our schools Superintendent and urge the Department of Education to reconsider their hasty decision.”

Council Member Julie Won said, "The DOE can't make massive decisions like firing a superintendent behind closed doors. The parents of District 30 deserve to be a part of processes that affect the lives of their children. Parents are integral in deciding what type of leadership will bring the best educational outcome for their children. They need to be able to weigh in before there is a decision to terminate a DOE leader. Excluding them entirely from the process is wrong."

Esta Efstathiadis and Faridys Matias-Zambrana, Co-Presidents, The Parent Association of PS85Q said, “Dr. Composto is a trusted leader and a valuable member of our school community. He remains steadfast in his commitment to the success and well-being of all our children. We stand in solidarity with our parents, students and all District 30 stakeholders in support of him remaining as our Superintendent.”

Katina Despas-Barous, PTA President of I.S. 1410 The Steinway said, “Why should Dr. Composto remain at the helm of DC 30? Aside from his 4 decade long experience beginning at the entry level posts of our education system to now his role as Superintendent? Dr. Composto is devoted to maintaining and sustaining our educational integrity. He does this through the support of his teachers, but he also does this from what can only be characterized as his genuine devotion to the children of DC 30. He does not seek the spotlight. He does not tout his accolades, maybe he should have done that more often. But, there is simply no one better at managing people, programs, implementing new ones. He is the bastion of innovation through relentless encouragement of his administration. If it were not for that genuine love of DC30, the toll that this global pandemic took on our schools, and children both mentally and physically would have been tenfold. 141, along with dozens of our DC30 schools remain stunned that, at such an unsure time, at a time when we are still teasing ourselves out of the effects of this global misfortune, we would look to replace a stronghold, a security, a normalcy for our district. It is nonsensical."

Deborah Alexander, a member of the Community Education Council for District 30 said, “It is outrageous that the Department of Education would summarily and with no explanation dismiss a 40-year veteran of NYC public schools who has proudly and ably led District 30 to become one of the top-performing districts in the City, despite having the overwhelming support of parents, teachers, staff, elected officials, and community members. We are heartbroken but determined to fight, as Dr. Composto has fought for every child of this district, whether it was adding seats for children with special needs, increasing access to gifted and talented programs for underserved communities, piloting the 529 college savings account initiative, and so much more."

Kelly Craig, D30 CEC Council Member and PS/IS 78Q PTA President said, “We demand the immediate reinstatement of Dr Composto to the list of finalists for the D30 Superintendent position. Dr

Composto has selflessly led this district to being one of the best and most successful in NYC. He's a much beloved leader, advocate and inspiration of childhood education in Queens. To remove him from his position, which he has thrived in, would be an injustice to the Principals, teachers, staff, parents, and most of all the children, of this district. Deputy Chancellor Blackburn, a man from Florida who has no experience or history of working in NYC education or in NYC in general, made a unilateral decision to not include Dr Composto in the final D30 Superintendent candidate round. He did not engage the D30 CEC, Principals, PTAs, SLTs or facilitate any parent engagement before making this decision. This is how he may have done things in Florida, but that's not how we do it in NYC - especially Queens."

Whitney Toussiant, a member of the Community Education Council for District 30 said, "I am not a politician. I am a parent in the district that was completely disregarded in this process. I am also a member of the CEC in this district and we are disheartened with the exclusion of Dr. Philip Composto, our current superintendent, in this selection process. Disenfranchising the parents of this district and disregarding such a strong servant leader is extremely abhorrent. If this is what mayoral control looks like I am not a supporter. District 30 deserves to be heard."