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## **Testimony for NYS Senate and NYS Assembly**

### **Joint Public Hearing on School Governance and Mayoral Accountability**

March 4, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on School Governance and Mayoral Accountability. My name is Jennifer Choi. I'm a parent of two autistic high school students with IEPs in Queens. I'm also a special education advocate with Special Support Services, LLC, a parent-led advocacy consulting group.

On Wednesday, the new New York City Education Chancellor, David Banks announced bold changes to the structure of the Department of Education. As a special education advocate, I was happy to hear about his plans for instruction for students with dyslexia. Parents and advocates around me said.. well let's see what happens. I said this too but the truth is, no child has time for that. Childhood happens just once in a lifetime. If the Banks plan fails, we can't walk back the damage just like we can't walk back the damage from the Carranza plan.

The biggest special education failure from Chancellor Carranza was removing the Special Education department from Deputy Chancellorship. Students with IEPs make up 20% of the population but we lost our seat at the table and we still don't have it back with the new Mayor. We've heard the grand plans and I'm sure we will hear more but while we'd love to be a believer, we need accountability factored into those grand plans.

What are the accountability structures in place for students with disabilities?

- Has Chancellor Banks even spoken to the parent-elected Citywide Council for Special Education to learn what should be in place?

- Has he hired a special education ombudsman to investigate repeat offender schools that violate the IDEA?
- Has he provided Implicit Bias training against students with disabilities to staff who oversee the IEP process with a target to see if the training has made an impact?
- Has he publicly provided the number of P311 special education complaints and a target number for reduction?

What are the accountability structures in place to protect students with disabilities from educational neglect and discrimination? With every new mayor and every new chancellor, that is never part of the grand plan. I urge our legislators to deeply consider how to improve school governance and mayoral accountability by requiring the mayor by law to include better accountability measures for students with disabilities or perhaps make greater changes to mayor accountability if our students with disabilities can not be further protected.

Thank you.



Jennifer Choi

Managing Member and Advocate

Special Support Services, LLC