



DANIEL SQUADRON
SENATOR, 25TH DISTRICT

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

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JUDICIARY
TRANSPORTATION

November 4, 2011

Dennis Walcott
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Walcott:

I write regarding the draft rezoning plan for District 2 in Lower Manhattan for the 2012-2013 academic year. The proposal affects thousands of families in many schools in my district, including P.S. 234, P.S. 397, P.S. 276, P.S. 89, P.S. 130, and the Peck Slip School, set to begin incubation at the Tweed Courthouse classroom space in 2012. I am concerned that any proposal by DOE will not incorporate all important information.

As you are well aware, the residential population in Lower Manhattan has more than doubled in the last ten years. Despite the welcome addition of P.S. 276, P.S. 397, and the Peck Slip School, the pace of new school construction has not matched this growth. Every school in Lower Manhattan has been forced to put students on a waitlist, and several schools, such as P.S. 89 and P.S. 397, have an unsustainable number of kindergarten sections. It is clear, as more residential buildings are constructed and young families continue to move into the community, that DOE and the School Construction Authority (SCA) must plan for additional school space in Lower Manhattan. I appreciate DOE responding to our call to add more seats at the Peck Slip School, and expect that the new zoning plan will reflect this change.

However, I am concerned about the accuracy of the projections upon which the draft rezoning plan is based. It is my understanding that the projections are primarily based on enrollment and applicant data, including new housing construction, zoned retention rates, and the capacity of each school.

The zoning plans do not include some important factors. The SCA must develop more accurate assessments of the capacity and demand for school seats in Lower Manhattan. The SCA could improve the accuracy of projected demand with my bill S2884, which includes mechanisms for more accurate student population projections, more transparency and feedback in planning, and a stronger voice for parents and the public. Using Department of City Planning population projections and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene birth rate data would better reflect the heightened demand for seats.

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In addition, despite efforts to create balanced zones for the 2011-2012 academic year based on projections of new students, siblings claimed a significant number of seats. Surveys of students' families could determine the number and timetable by which siblings articulate into a school.

Whether through passage of my bill or a collaborative effort, I urge DOE to improve the method by which projections are made. I look forward to working with you on those improvements. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns. If you have any questions, you may call me at (212) 298-5565.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daniel Squadron", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Daniel Squadron
State Senator
25th Senate District