

Testimony for Joint Public Hearing examining school governance

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I have been a public-school parent in District 5 (Harlem) in New York City for six years and will likely continue to be a public-school parent for at least ten more years. Over the last six years I have been sad to see how decision-making that is highly centralized to one person, the mayor, has gotten in the way of creating a system that is responsive to students, and especially the most vulnerable students who would benefit from school integration, curriculum that is culturally sustaining, school environments that are more nurturing and less policing, smaller class sizes, adequate pupil transportation, and timely related services. Most especially, during the pandemic, mayoral control seemed to lead to decision making that prioritized how schools could serve businesses (by providing childcare for workers) as opposed to how schools could serve children (by attending to their physical and mental health).

I want the legislature to take mayoral control out of the budget and allow for a separate process to amend the Education Law and I want the legislature to establish a task force to develop an alternative to mayoral control. Overall the system of governance for our schools needs to be more responsive to students and parents and less responsive to enterprises pursuing contracts for tests.