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THE SENATE  
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JUDICIARY

May 23, 2013

John King  
Commissioner  
New York State Education Department  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12234

Dear Commissioner King,

I am writing on behalf of public school parents in my district who have expressed concern about the standardized English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics tests that the State Education Department (SED) has contracted with Pearson PLC (Pearson) to design. In particular, parents of 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, whose test results weigh heavily on screened middle school and high school admissions, have requested that Pearson be required to release to them their individual children's graded exams taken in April 2013.

As you know, significant flaws have recently been exposed in Pearson's scoring methodology for the New York City Department of Education's Gifted & Talented assessment. The extent of these errors undermines public trust in Pearson, the exams it designs and the education departments that contract with the company. Furthermore, respected educators have noted that this year's New York State 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade assessment exams included material that is not part of current school curricula and that students had not covered, as well as plugs for commercial products. Moreover, just last spring, SED had to throw out flawed Pearson-designed questions on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA and the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math exams.

Given the legitimate questions about Pearson's reliability, parents whose children took high stakes tests designed by the company deserve to see first-hand whether their children's exams were graded correctly and whether the questions asked align with material their children had been taught. Releasing the exams will also enable teachers, parents and students to see where mistakes were made, both in terms of content and test-taking process, so that students may better prepare in the future. This is especially true in this first year that the tests are tied to the common core.



I understand that Pearson objects to such disclosure on the grounds that the company wants to re-use questions on future exams. Surely the State is paying Pearson a sufficient sum for it to hire educators to create new questions for next year. I should note that according to Reuters, Pearson's Executive Director takes home basic compensation of \$2.8 million dollars.

I urge SED to require Pearson to release to parents or legal guardians of every child who took this past April's State Assessment Exams a copy of the individual student's completed and graded exam. Such transparency is essential if we are to restore public faith in our standardized tests and our public education system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brad Hoylman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Brad Hoylman  
New York State Senator  
27<sup>th</sup> District