

NEW YORK
STATE
SENATE



May 13, 2016

SENATOR TODD KAMINSKY
9TH SENATE DISTRICT

Commissioner MaryEllen Elia
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Commissioner Elia,

We are writing to express deep concern about the lack of diploma options for New York State's students and urge your immediate action at Monday's Board of Regents meeting.

Since the Regents Competency Tests ("RCT") were eliminated in 2011, many students, mainly non-traditional learners and those with special needs, have not received a recognized high school diploma. As you know, without RCTs, students are required to pass five Regents exams in order to earn a high school diploma. Despite the various safety net options recently approved, some students are having tremendous difficulties in passing these tests to meet the state requirements.

We understand that the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential was introduced as an alternative for high school students. However, this new credential is not recognized by colleges, the military, or many employers. Thus, students who cannot pass the five required Regents exams, or take advantage of safety net options, are unable to obtain a high school diploma and are therefore locked out of many post-secondary opportunities in which they would otherwise thrive.

New York's non-traditional and special needs students cannot be left behind. Many of these students are talented artists, musicians and technicians who, without a recognized high school diploma, will be unable to pursue their dreams professionally and academically.

Monday is the last chance to rescue this year's class of students from being left behind and facing an uncertain or bleak future. While working on longer term solutions, we urge you to take whatever remedial steps necessary to correct this issue on Monday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Todd Kaminsky".

Todd Kaminsky
Member of Senate

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shelley B. Mayer".

Shelley Mayer
Member of Assembly
Chair, Education Subcommittee on Students with
Special Needs

CC: NYS Board of Regents:
Chancellor Betty Rosa
Vice Chancellor T. Andrew Brown
Mr. James R. Tallon, Jr.
Mr. Roger Tilles
Mr. Lester W. Young, Jr.
Ms. Christine D. Cea
Mr. Wade S. Norwood
Ms. Kathleen M. Cashin
Mr. James E. Cottrell
Ms. Josephine Victoria Finn
Ms. Judith Chin
Ms. Beverly Ouderkirk
Ms. Catherine Collins
Ms. Judith Johnson
Ms. Nan Eileen Mead
Ms. Elizabeth S. Hakanson
Mr. Luis O. Reyes