

3/2/2022

Chair Liu, Chair Benedetto, Majority Leader Stewart Cousins, and Speaker Heastie:

Allow me to introduce myself, I am Dr. Lisa Millsaps-Graham, married for 21 years to Hashim Muhammad-Graham. Together we have three bundles that have attended public school since 2005. Both my husband and I have been actively involved in the parent teacher associations and have held executive positions in both Brooklyn District 17 and 18 schools. The reason for this letter is to express my support to extend mayoral control of New York City's public school system. Our children have been and are scholar athletes, who have attended the following elementary schools in Brooklyn, New York: PS 235, PS/IS 66 and PS 279, and currently our youngest is attending 10th grade at Medgar Evers College Preparatory School K590 (where the two eldest graduated from in 2018 and 2020 respectively).

The past two school years (and even prior), our entire school system has been in upheaval. I believe that it is critical that Mayor Eric Adams and his dynamic team be given the chance to take accountability and lead the school system. Mayor Adams says that he understands the importance of partnering with parents and the community for their input and I believe him. I remember the first time I met Mayor Eric Adams in 2014, during his first year as Borough President. As Borough President, Mayor Adams, invited all of Brooklyn's 2014 graduates to attend his first graduation ceremony at his office. Adams took time to personally congratulate and engage every graduate and their families from elementary, middle, and high school. That simple act let me know that he truly cares about the educational success of his constituents and just as I believed he did a phenomenal job in that role. He was a consistent resource, hosting parent workshops to keep parent/guardians informed of what was happening in schools and providing available resources to parents. Throughout Mayor Adams tenure as Brooklyn Borough President my entire family, including my parents were especially impressed by his mannerisms and thoughtfulness. Commemorating students' achievements is a true sign of student focused allyship that is necessary for student success. My eldest, who was honored at that 2014 Brooklyn Borough President graduation ceremony, will be graduating from the University at Buffalo, with a Computer Engineering degree this year, and he still reflects on that celebratory moment. Parent involvement is also critically important for the future of students' educational goals and dreams, and it is outstanding that Mayor Adams understands this. Structurally our public education system needs resources, and fiscal changes that will improve the academic, operational, and managerial processes. It is unfortunate how the pandemic, COVID-19, has heightened stress, anxiety, emotional pain, and learning loss for New York's public-school students, and to some degree my own children.

Mayor Adams is a product of city schools and the City University of New York. I believe he understands the challenges and opportunities of our system, and deeply cares about school quality, serving students with special needs, and preparing our child(ren) for success after high school. As we recover from two years of hardship, there must be knowledgeable, mindful, and accountable leadership in place to choose a path forward for city schools. Mayor Adams was voted into office to lead the city- and that includes leading our school system. Mayoral control allows for streamlined decision making and allows for resources to be more easily and quickly

moved to support schools especially those that are failing and students that are having difficulty with academic achievement- which is exactly what we need at this time.

Mayoral control of New York City schools deserves to be renewed. The current crisis facing our school children makes extension necessary. I believe Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks when they say that they will include parent voice in their decisions- we need to give them the chance in their new roles.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Millsaps-Graham, Ph.D., MPH, MS