

**The Joint Legislative Affairs Committee of High Achieving Long Island Public School
Districts**

*Garden City Public Schools
Manhasset Public Schools
North Shore Schools*

March 24, 2015

Senator Carl Marcellino
250 Townsend Square
Oyster Bay, NY 11771

Dear Senator Marcellino:

We the undersigned, as the elected representatives of our communities and in partnership with the superintendents of our school districts, stand together to oppose Governor Cuomo's 2015 Education Agenda. We cannot allow increased state control of our public schools.

The Governor's hasty proposal to increase the weighting of state standardized tests to 50% of teachers' evaluations and to replace district administrators with outside evaluators is a drastic step in the wrong direction. These changes will not improve accountability, will not produce meaningful assessments; however, they will impose additional costs. The current system should be suspended so that appropriate stakeholders may be engaged to transparently create a fair and meaningful evaluation system that does not narrow the curriculum or take away authentic learning opportunities.

The Governor's charter school agenda calls for a substantial increase in the number of privately-operated charter schools. This is counter to the idea of consolidating school resources, especially in small districts. There are no established criteria for charter schools and they are not held to the same accountability measures as public schools. Charter schools will siphon funds from public schools already constrained by unfunded mandates, withdrawal of state aid, and the "2% tax cap." We strongly believe that there should be no obligation on the part of public school districts on Long Island to pay for unneeded charter schooling.

The Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) funds must be restored. School districts across NYS have suffered devastating cuts due to the state's withholding of critical education funding, with Long Island districts losing an estimated \$1.2 billion over the past four years. Had the GEA been eliminated for the 2014-2015 school year, Long Island's current school tax levy would be 2.6% lower than it is. We call on the Governor and the Legislature to accept their responsibility to fund public education by completely eliminating the GEA this year.

Public education is the cornerstone of our democracy; public schools are the anchors of our communities. Our districts provide outstanding educational experiences for our students. “One size fits all” education mandates and sweeping reform agendas fail to recognize best practices, and in a tax cap era, put other successful programs at risk. Please take action on these three critical issues to ensure that New York State continues to have strong public education.

Sincerely,

Garden City Public Schools Board of Education

Barbara Trapasso, *President*

Angela Heineman, *Vice President*

Tom Pinou, *Trustee*

Robert Martin, *Trustee*

Laura Hastings, *Trustee*

Manhasset Public Schools Board of Education

Regina Rule, *President*

Carlo Prinzo, *Vice President*

Craig Anderson, *Trustee*

Ann Marie Curd, *Trustee*

North Shore Schools Board of Education

Dr. Herman A. Berliner, *President*

Antoinette Labbate, *Vice President*

Joanna Commander, *Trustee*

Lara Gonzalez, *Trustee*

Sara Jones, *Trustee*

Marianne M. Russo, *Trustee*

Michael Nightingale, *Trustee*