

Miller Place Union Free School District

7 Memorial Drive, Miller Place, New York 11764-2036

Telephone: (631) 474-2700 Fax: (631) 474-0686

Board of Education

Johanna Testa, President
Richard Panico, Vice President
Noelle Dunlop, Trustee
Keith Frank, Trustee
Lisa Reitan, Trustee

Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Marianne F. Cartisano

Deputy Superintendent

Seth A. Lipshie

Assistant Superintendent

Susan G. Hodun

Executive Director for

Educational Services

Sandra A. Wojnowski

August 16, 2018

Ms. MaryEllen Elia, Commissioner of Education
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12234

Dear Commissioner Elia:

The Miller Place School District Board of Education is writing to ask that the provisions of the revised emergency regulations regarding opt outs and participation in New York State assessments be revised, so that the Title I funding consequences are removed and that efforts and initiatives to increase student participation in New York State assessments are decided at the local level.

The State's new emergency regulations require that if a District's overall opt out percentages aren't showing improvement by the spring of 2019, less than a year away, the State can impose various mandates on the District. These mandates include but are not limited to requiring Districts to create self-assessments, task forces, and audits in order to decrease the percentage of opt outs. Districts would be forced to spend additional time and resources trying to change the attitudes of parents who opt their children out, instead of addressing more timely matters such as school safety, mental health crises, drug and alcohol abuse, chronic absenteeism, and more. In addition, the emergency regulations do not include additional funding for Districts if the mandates are imposed.

If test participation does not improve according to the State's parameters, the emergency regulations allow the State to force Districts to spend Title I funding on efforts to convince parents to have their children tested. Currently our District's opt out rate is approximately 70%. It is because of this provision in particular that we must comment and oppose.

Title I funds are provided specifically to help economically disadvantaged students participate and learn on a level playing field with their more affluent peers, removing some of the obstacles to a sound education that profound poverty presents, by funding programs such as remedial reading and math, and other academic support programs. As a Board of Education, it is our fiduciary responsibility to speak out and ensure that these essential funds are never placed in jeopardy and that even our economically disadvantaged students continue to receive this critical help. For the State to promulgate regulations that would allow these vulnerable children to lose these resources for the sake of trying to convince parents why their children should participate in taking State assessments, is simply not acceptable.

The above provisions of the revised emergency regulations are not feasible in terms of time, resources, budget, and programming. These provisions take unnecessary aim at some of our most at-risk students, those requiring support through Title I funds.

Ms. MaryEllen Elia, Commissioner of Education

August 16, 2018

Page 2

We, therefore, request that the State reconsider and revise the regulations so as to no longer involve compromising Title I funding. In addition, we ask that rather than dictate what a school district must do regarding opt out percentages, the State instead leave those decisions up to the individual school district.

Respectfully,

The Miller Place School District Board of Education

Cc: Chancellor Rosa

Dr. Long

Members of the New York State Board of Regents