



April 5, 2019

The Honorable Betty Rosa  
Chancellor, New York State Board of Regents  
The Honorable MaryEllen Elia  
Commissioner of Education  
New York State Education Department  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12234

Dear Chancellor Rosa and Commissioner Elia:

I write on behalf of school district leaders across our state to express their consternation over your statement concerning reports of districts disregarding parents' requests to opt their children out of state assessments.

As school district leaders, we respect the right of parents to have their children not participate in the state assessments. With this statement, however, you have cast aspersions on all superintendents and school administrators. We would have expected the Department to contact districts directly where problems have arisen. We would have assisted those efforts. We are lost as to why a statement insinuating broader failures was deemed necessary.

Since the inception of high stakes testing, school leaders have done their best to carry out the directives of the State Education Department, while striving always to keep the best interests of children in mind when administering state tests. School district leaders have had to balance the call by the Board of Regents to reduce "opt outs" while at the same time respecting the needs and desires of the communities they serve. In order to comply with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, local leaders have been encouraged to support test participation to avoid forced adoption of corrective action plans.

We may never know why the decision was made to make a blanket statement about "school leaders." We do know that many superintendents are now questioning why they have stood side-by-side with the Department to implement its assessment agenda, even when they disagreed with it.

We hope to work with the Chancellor, the Board, and the Commissioner to address the variety of issues that have been raised over the grades 3-8 testing this week. Our members are the leaders who are always called upon to make Department initiatives work in all the communities that comprise our state.

Sincerely,  
Charles, S. Dedrick, Ed.D  
Executive Director