



**The Public Advocate for the City of New York**

*Improving Access to City Services*

**Betsy Gotbaum**  
Public Advocate

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Arne Duncan  
U.S. Secretary of Education  
Office of the Secretary  
400 Maryland Avenue Southwest  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

I want to congratulate you, first, on your confirmation as President Obama's Secretary of Education. I respect the work you did to improve the Chicago Public Schools, and I wish you the best of luck in your new job.

I am writing in response to a number of comments you made regarding the current system of school governance in New York City public schools. While we both agree generally that the Mayor should retain control of the school system, I would caution against focusing too much on the data provided by the Department of Education—I have always said that it is a fundamental flaw that the current system gives the Mayor and Chancellor an incentive to present information in a positive light.

As Public Advocate for the City of New York during this time, I have a unique perspective on the school governance law enacted by the State Legislature in 2002 and implemented by Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein over the past seven years. To be clear, I support mayoral control and believe that the school governance law should be renewed—but my support is contingent upon a few changes that will bring greater transparency, public accountability, and parental involvement to the school system.

These changes, among others, are largely similar to those recommended by the Commission on School Governance, which I appointed in 2007 at the request of the State Assembly. I have enclosed a copy of the Commission's Final Report, and I encourage you to look over it. I have also included the companion document, When Mayors Take Charge: School Governance in the City, published by The Brookings Institution. This book, edited by Joseph P. Viteritti, Executive Director of the Commission, includes papers by leading experts on mayoral control, as well as the first in-depth examination of school governance in New York City.

I hope you find the report and book informative, and I wish you the best of luck.

Sincerely,

Betsy Gotbaum

