



The Public Advocate for the City of New York
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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

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**PA Gotbaum: City Officials Must Ensure that Every NYC Public School
Child Receives a Sound Basic Education**

Testimony from July 30th Contracts for Excellence Public Hearing

“Good evening. My name is Betsy Gotbaum, Public Advocate for the City of New York. CFE was intended to bring new funds to NYC to provide a sound basic education for every public school child. The target population was low performing students and schools, student from families in poverty, students with disabilities, and English language learners.

While we have made progress in increased funding from the state, New York City fell short in its anticipated contribution this year. It is the responsibility of all city officials, especially in tough economic times, to work together to achieve these goals and work closely with advocates to ensure proper implementation of the law.

The DOE and the City must do better in providing necessary and required information to ensure the public is informed and involved. It is critical for parents and the public, as well as the Comptroller and other City officials, to have access to the specific annual school-level programs and personnel expenditures required by the State. This information does not currently appear in the publicly provided materials, but tracking actual spending at the school level is the only way we can determine how much money is actually being used for new and expanded programs.

The DOE appears to have complied with the proper distribution of Contract funds in its new proposal. This is an important step forward. However, since the City fell short of providing the full anticipated funding, and the Council’s tax levy restoration was distributed to mainly non-Contract schools, there are still questions as to whether core services at low-performing schools will be cut. I am also worried about CFE funding being used to plug holes in school budgets where it was the city’s responsibility to fill the holes left by the city’s shortfall. I am also worried that the money added by CFE will not be used as it was intended to provide resources above the base funding for the city’s highest need schools.

Moreover, it appears that the DOE is prepared to invest its discretionary funds in programs that may not be compliant with CFE regulations:

1) \$20 Million in Expansion of School-wide Performance Pay Initiative. This appears to violate the rule that incentive programs must “encourage highly qualified and experienced teachers to work in low performing schools, provided that such programs shall not use funds for school-wide or district-wide salary enhancements or raises.”

2) \$10 million for New and Expanded Principal Training. The DOE needs to show the Contract dollars for this program are supplementing, and not supplanting, previous dollars that were raised privately and publicly.



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In sum, there is incremental progress toward achieving the goals and principles of CFE. However, the weakening of the economy and the budget shortfalls mean that costs are still outrunning increases in funding.

The approach to the distribution of Contract and tax levy funds taken by the DOE may undercut the goals and principles of CFE. The DOE is commingling Contract and tax levy funding that has a potential to put at a disadvantage the high-need schools and students we want to advance.

It is disingenuous for the DOE to blame the requirements of the CFE for distribution problems. Instead it should be looking at its own now nearly 18-billion-dollar budget to identify and solve these problems and to work with City and State officials to provide transparent budgetary information.

As Public Advocate, I take heart in our progress, and look forward working together to close the achievement gap, identify distribution and funding discrepancies, and provide sound basic education to every public school student. Thank you.”

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