

February 3, 2010

The Honorable David A. Paterson
Governor – State of New York
The State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Paterson,

First and foremost, thank you on behalf of the entire Rochester City Council for the attention that you are giving the topic of Educational Reform/Mayoral Accountability for the Rochester City School District. While there is not unanimity of opinion regarding the merits of this governance model among City Council members, there are nonetheless, a number of items that we all agree should be incorporated in such legislation if drafted. These proposals are based upon our review and research of Mayoral Accountability models including that of New York City and are believed to be necessary in order to ensure that the residents of Rochester have an educational structure that provides clear accountability, checks and balances and parental involvement thus increasing the opportunity for positive academic outcomes for our youngest constituents -- the students of the Rochester City School District.

We certainly understand that this issue is one that will clearly be decided in the State Legislature. However, as elected officials in this community we humbly request due consideration to our issues of concern outlined below when drafting the legislation. Respectfully, we ask that the following items be considered when drafting Rochester's Educational Reform Legislation:

- **Fiscal Oversight** - It is critical that City Council as the legislative body charged with the oversight of taxpayers' dollars be authorized to exercise a level of fiscal and administrative oversight similar to that it currently executes with all city departments. This provision would include a requirement for City Council approval of contracts in the amount of \$10,000 and above.
- **Appointing Authority for the Panel of Education** - It is imperative that if the State chooses to dismantle an elected board that there be an appointed body that is unbiased, balanced and representative of the community. We request that this body, typically referred to as the Education Panel be appointed jointly by the Mayor and City Council. We request that the Mayor be authorized to appoint 5 of the 9 members of the Panel, two of whom must be a parent who has children enrolled in City School District Education Programs; and, that City

Council have the authority to appoint 4 of the 9. Furthermore, to ensure full community representation, City Council will be authorized to appoint one member from each of the 4 City Council Districts. At least one of the City Council appointees must be parents who have children enrolled in the City School District Educational Programs.

- **Accountability/Reporting structure** - Due to the complexities of the education system, the vast size of the school district and the expertise required to administer a successful education program to a city the size of Rochester, Council asks that the Superintendent report directly to the Mayor. Furthermore, City Council requests that the Department of Education be supported and guided by a Deputy Mayor of Education. This position is critical given the level of importance of this system and the need for an effective, responsive interface between the education system and the existing city operating and administrative structure. The Deputy Mayor would report to the Mayor and would serve as a resource to both the Mayor and the Superintendent. Considering the high degree of transition among superintendents the Deputy Mayor of Education's position would aid in providing stability and continuity of focus and oversight particularly during such periods. The Superintendent and Deputy Mayor of Education must have an advanced degree in urban education and have demonstrated experience and results within the field. The Superintendent and Deputy Mayor of Education shall be hired by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council, similar to the confirmation authority that City Council currently has with all Mayoral appointed department heads. In order to ensure true accountability as the legislative branch for the City of Rochester, City Council requests that a similarly qualified position be designated as a support and resource for Council. The authorizing legislation should require that adequate resources be allocated to support these positions.
- **A Committee on Special Education** – Similar to the committee that is set up within the New York City legislation, this is to ensure that the needs of children with special needs are met and not concentrated to only specific schools. This committee should have members that have advanced experience and/or education credentials in special education, and there should be a separate tracking of accountability incorporated when measuring students with special needs and not be merged with the overall school accountability measures. We believe this population is our most vulnerable and with the growing number of refugee and English as a Second Language population that are relocating to the Rochester area we have to pay special attention to their needs.
- **Parental Involvement** – Council asks that not only should the legislation require the participation of parental groups but specifically state that parental involvement and representation is required on the school based planning teams. There should also be a mechanism for parents to participate in the hiring and disciplinary process of teachers, principals and administrators in a similar format as was used in New York City.

This legislation is critical to the future of the Rochester community. Again, we request that you consider our suggestions when drafting this very important legislation. As the duly elected legislative body of the City of Rochester we thought it well within our rights as legislators to share

our immediate concerns on this very important legislation that your office is drafting. Should you wish to contact me please feel free to do so. I welcome any communication with your office. I can be reached at (585) 428-7538.

Sincerely,

Loretta C. Scott
Chair, Education Ad Hoc Committee, Rochester City Council

Cc: The Honorable David F. Gantt, Member, New York State Assembly
The Honorable Joseph D. Morelle, Member, New York State Assembly
The Honorable Robert J. Duffy, Mayor, City of Rochester
Duffy Palmer, Secretary, Department of Education, State of New York
The Honorable Lovely A. Warren, President, Rochester City Council
The Honorable Elaine M. Spaul, Vice President, Rochester City Council
The Honorable Adam C. McFadden, Member, Rochester City Council
The Honorable Carolee A. Conklin, Member, Rochester City Council
The Honorable Dana K. Miller, Member, Rochester City Council
The Honorable Carla M. Palumbo, Member, Rochester City Council
The Honorable Matt Haag, Member, Rochester City Council
The Honorable Jacklyn Ortiz, Member, Rochester City Council