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May 6, 2021

Mayor Bill de Blasio
Speaker Cory Johnson
NYC Council Education Committee Chair Mark Treyger
Chancellor Meisha Ross Porter
New York City, New York

Dear Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Johnson, Councilmember Treyger, and Chancellor Porter,

The Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC) has long supported efforts to reduce class size in New York City schools. CPAC represents all the PAs and PTAs in NYC, and through them the parents of New York City school children. In the wake of the pandemic and with the infusion of federal funds, we believe reduced class sizes are more important than ever, given the emotional and remedial supports that many of our children will need next year. **CPAC therefore would like to give our support to the following, derived from Class Size Matters' resolution, to reduce class sizes in NYC public schools:**

Whereas:

1. The City Council has proposed in its Preliminary Budget Response that \$250 million be allocated towards an initiative to lower class size next year, especially targeted to struggling schools with vulnerable students;
2. \$250 million for class size reduction could pay the salaries of roughly, 2,500 new general and special education teachers, that in turn could reduce the size of 10,000 classrooms – as adding a new teacher lowers class size for all the other students in a school in the same grade or subject;
3. The City Council has also proposed an increase of \$110 million to pay for at least one full-time school counselor and one full-time social worker in every public school;
4. In the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit, NY's highest court determined that NYC public school class sizes were too large to provide students with their constitutional right to a sound basic education; and
5. Class sizes have increased since that decision was made in 2003, particularly in the early grades;
6. Currently about one third or over 300,000 NYC students are taught in classes of 30 or more students;
7. Reducing class size has proven to be one of the best ways to improve student learning, lower teacher attrition rates and disciplinary problems, and narrow achievement and opportunity gaps between racial, gender, and economic groups;
8. Smaller classes have also been shown to lead to better grades and test scores, stronger student engagement, fewer disciplinary referrals, and higher graduation rates, especially for students who need help the most; and

9. NYC schools are due to receive more than \$530 million in additional state funds next year, rising to \$1.3 billion annually over the next three years in increased Foundation Aid in fulfillment of the decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) case;

10. NYC schools are also due to receive approximately \$7 billion in federal funds to be spent over the next two to three years, to help them reopen safely and well and with additional supports so students can begin to recover from all the disruptions caused by the pandemic;

11. If there is a continued need for three feet of social distancing next year due to the pandemic, fewer than half of all NYC students would be able to attend school full-time next year without lowering class size;

12. Smaller classes are essential to the health, safety, and emotional well-being of our students, as well as their academic achievement;

Therefore, Be It Resolved: the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC) urges the Mayor, Chancellor Meisha Porter, Speaker Corey Johnson, Education Committee Chair Mark Treyger, and the members of the City Council to ensure the following:

1. That the final, negotiated city budget for FY 2022 should include at least \$250 million to be allocated to lower class size as the Council has proposed;
2. That this budget pay for an estimated 2,500 additional general and special education teachers to lower class size, with a priority on grades K-5, and in communities that have suffered a disproportionate impact from the pandemic;
3. That the budget also include \$110 million to pay for at least one full-time school counselor and one full-time social worker in each individual public school (not to be shared among co-located schools);
4. That rigorous reporting requirements and accountability provisions be required, so that smaller classes and more counselors/social workers actually result from these additional funds;
5. That in order to create more space for smaller classes, the DOE shall relocate as many Pre-K classes in elementary schools as possible to CBO's and DOE Pre-K centers that currently provide Pre-K and have sufficient space;
6. That the DOE and the School Construction Authority (SCA) shall immediately lease or purchase the buildings of the 17 Catholic Schools that are now closing in the wake of the pandemic;
7. That DOE shall create a four- or five-year plan to phase in lower class sizes in all schools, and create sufficient space by building and leasing more schools, aided by the infusion of new funds from the Infrastructure bill proposed by President Biden;
8. That the City shall revamp the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) process to require that all new large-scale developments include space for new schools in their projects;
9. That next year represents a golden opportunity for Mayor DeBlasio to begin to provide the smaller classes that NYC students have long needed, as there is no longer any excuse for him or future Mayors to deny students with their constitutional right to smaller classes.