

Mamdani allies urge him to issue moratorium on AI in schools

Parents, advocates and lawmakers called for a two-year pause, citing risks to student privacy and critical thinking.

BY MADINA TOURÉ | 04/17/2026 11:51 AM EDT



Parents and advocates rallied in City Hall Park to call for a two-year moratorium on artificial intelligence in schools. | Madina Touré/POLITICO

NEW YORK — Allies of Mayor Zohran Mamdani urged him to issue a two-year moratorium on artificial intelligence in New York City public schools, as the school system looks to roll out new guidelines to address the rapidly changing technology.

Details: The Coalition for an AI Moratorium — a group of parents, educators and advocates — rallied Thursday afternoon to denounce preliminary guidelines the Department of Education [released last month](#). They argue the technology poses a significant risk to students' privacy, cognitive development, critical thinking and mental health.

The rally drew members of the Alliance for Quality Education, a prominent statewide education advocacy group [that endorsed Mamdani](#), and New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools, a citywide coalition that met with his campaign during the mayoral race.

“The mayor has mayoral control [of public schools] so he can just say ‘Slow your horses, we don’t gotta put anything out in June,’” said Kaliris Salas-Ramirez, an East Harlem parent and member of the coalition’s steering committee, during the rally at City Hall Park.

Former City Comptroller Brad Lander — [whom Mamdani endorsed](#) in his bid for Congress — and City Councilmember Alexa Avilés, a democratic socialist and Mamdani backer, also attended.

“Letting AI do your schoolwork is like sending a robot to the gym to exercise for you,” Lander said. “There are good uses for robots, but they cannot help you get stronger.”

A 45-day public comment period is underway, and the DOE plans to publish updated guidance in June. The pushback also comes ahead of a vote by the DOE’s governing body later this month to establish the city’s first AI-focused high school.

How we got here: Mamdani told business leaders last summer that AI could be helpful for [putting together lesson plans](#). But he later [walked back some of those remarks](#), maintaining the technology should supplement rather than replace teachers.

The AI moratorium coalition delivered a petition Thursday with nearly 2,000 signatures to Ailish Brady, senior education adviser for First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan. The group has also engaged Chancellor Kamar Samuels, according to Salas-Ramirez.

A City Hall spokesperson did not respond to requests for comment on Mamdani’s position. But Nicole Brownstein, a DOE spokesperson, said engagement with school communities will continue, and noted many students and educators “are already engaging with AI in their lives.”

“In order to meet this moment, we know we must design educational spaces that never lose sight of original thinking or human centered learning while advancing AI literacy safely and responsibly, ultimately preparing our students for the workplace of the future,” Brownstein said in a statement.

In a candidate survey submitted to NYC Kids PAC, a political action committee, before the June Democratic primary, Mamdani accused former Mayor Eric Adams of taking a “cavalier approach” to AI in schools and vowed to work with teacher, parent and student groups to establish

guardrails before any expansion. The PAC is part of the AI moratorium coalition.

“Right now, Mayor Mamdani is continuing the course that Eric Adams began, rushing ahead with the expansion of AI without careful guardrails or any actual consultation with teachers, parents or students,” said Leonie Haimson, co-chair of the Parent Coalition for Student Privacy.