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NYSUT • 800 Troy-Schenectady Road • Latham, NY • 12110-2455 • www.nysut.org

CONTACT:

Matt Hamilton

518-570-0430

Email: matthew.hamilton@nysut.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NYSUT calls on state to seek federal testing waiver amid ongoing challenges of pandemic

ALBANY, N.Y. Jan. 19, 2021 — New York State United Teachers today called on the state Education Department to request a federal waiver of grade 3-8 and high school testing requirements — just as New York was granted last year — amid the ongoing challenges students and educators statewide are facing related to the coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter to Interim State Education Commissioner Betty Rosa, Regents Chancellor Lester Young Jr. and the Board of Regents, the union noted that the pandemic has continued to disrupt the normal education process, as schools have vacillated between hybrid, in-person and remote offerings. Even as educators have doubled their work to help students keep up with state education standards, it is clear that, “Throughout this school year there has not been a standardized mode of instruction across the state,” the letter states.

“Without standardized instructional modes there should not be a standardized test at the end of the year,” the union wrote. “On top of this, teachers are trying to address the social emotional needs of students caused by the pandemic and racial unrest caused by the death of George Floyd. Given the recent surge, it is unlikely that will change much for the rest of the school year, we urge you to request a federal waiver of the grade 3-8 and high school testing requirements to relieve the current pressure on the school system.”

The union also is calling on the state to delay implementation of the Next Generation Learning Standards until the 2023-24 school year and new tests based on those standards until spring 2024. This would give districts and educators additional time to properly prepare and for students to demonstrate their mastery of the standards.

The letter can be [read in full here](#).

“While we believe in measuring student success, students should again be afforded opportunities to showcase their hard work without being subjected to the stress of either the 3-8 or Regents exams in the midst of crises on multiple fronts,” NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said. “Educators know their students’ needs and how to maximize their potential. Giving them the flexibility to help their students achieve their best without administering these tests is the right thing to do this year.”

“Our students’ social and emotional wellbeing must come first,” NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene T. DiBrango said. “It’s likely that many students will need more time to master new learning standards because of the disruption of the pandemic. We cannot punish them with new standards and tests that most in the education community are not ready to fully implement.”

New York State United Teachers is a statewide union with more than 600,000 members in education, human services and health care. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.