

**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
HEARING REGARDING THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE
GOVERNANCE LAW FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

**TESTIMONY OF BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT MARTY
MARKOWITZ
FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2009**

GOOD MORNING CHAIRPERSON NOLAN, MEMBERS OF THE STATE ASSEMBLY'S EDUCATION COMMITTEE, PARENTS, AND EDUCATION ADVOCATES.

MY NAME IS CARLO SCISSURA, AND I AM THE CHIEF OF STAFF FOR BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT MARTY MARKOWITZ, WHO COULD NOT BE HERE TODAY. HE IS IN BROOKLYN — OR SHOULD I SAY, "BREUKELEN." YES, MARTY IS IN THE TOWN IN THE NETHERLANDS THAT GAVE US OUR NAME, REPRESENTING US AT A CELEBRATION OF THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF HOLLAND'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RICH HISTORY OF BROOKLYN AND NEW YORK CITY.

AND SO, ON BEHALF OF THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT, I WANT TO WELCOME YOU TO "BROOKLYN, USA," — AND THANK YOU FOR HOLDING THIS HEARING IN NEW YORK STATE'S LARGEST COUNTY.

MARTY HAS ASKED ME TO PRESENT HIS IDEAS TO IMPROVE THE GOVERNANCE LAWS, AND TO TALK ABOUT HIS VISION FOR MAYORAL CONTROL. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND, I SERVED AS VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD 20 FOR FIVE YEARS, AND I WAS THE FIRST PRESIDENT TO SERVE ON DISTRICT 20'S COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW GOVERNANCE LEGISLATION IN 2002. BASED ON THESE EXPERIENCES, I HAVE A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T WORK.

ON MARCH 5, 2009, THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT AND HIS C-E-C APPOINTEES HOSTED A PUBLIC HEARING TO GATHER INPUT FROM BROOKLYN RESIDENTS. WE HEARD RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PARENTS, COMMUNITY LEADERS, TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, AND P-T-A PRESIDENTS. THIS PROVIDED US WITH A TRUE BOROUGH-WIDE PERSPECTIVE, AND A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE SYSTEM IS CURRENTLY SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES, AS WELL AS WHAT IMPROVEMENTS CAN BE MADE.

LET ME BE CLEAR — THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT SUPPORTS MAYORAL CONTROL. HOWEVER, HE BELIEVES THAT THE LAW SHOULD BE MODIFIED. THE MAYOR SHOULD RETAIN CONTROL OF THE SCHOOLS, AND SHOULD CONTINUE TO APPOINT THE

CHANCELLOR. BUT WE MUST RETURN TO A SYSTEM OF 32 LOCAL DISTRICT OFFICES, EACH WITH ITS OWN SUPERINTENDENT AND SUPPORT STAFF, INCLUDING A TRUE DISTRICT-WIDE PARENT LIAISON. THESE SUPERINTENDENTS SHOULD HAVE JURISDICTION ONLY OVER SCHOOLS IN THAT GEOGRAPHIC DISTRICT, AND NOT SCHOOLS IN ANY OTHER DISTRICT.

THESE SUPERINTENDENTS SHOULD SIT ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR ANY CHARTER SCHOOLS LOCATED IN THEIR GEOGRAPHIC DISTRICT. THE C-E-C'S SHOULD ANNUALLY EVALUATE THE SUPERINTENDENTS AND COMMUNICATE THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CHANCELLOR, WHO WOULD THEN MAKE THE FINAL SELECTION.

IN ADDITION, THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT CALLS FOR THE CREATION OF AN INDEPENDENT EDUCATION OFFICE THAT WILL PROVIDE NON-PARTISAN REPORTING AND ANALYSIS OF THE COMBINED \$18 BILLION CAPITAL AND OPERATIONS BUDGETS, AND ALSO PROVIDE A COMPLETE ANALYSIS OF STUDENT OUTCOMES.

THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT RECOMMENDS THAT THE COMPOSITION OF THE PANEL FOR EDUCATION POLICY REMAIN IN ITS CURRENT FORM . HOWEVER, MEMBERS SHOULD BE

APPOINTED FOR FIXED TERMS, AND THE PANEL SHOULD HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO APPROVE ALL D-O-E BUDGETS, MAJOR POLICY ISSUES, AND CONTRACTS. THE CHANCELLOR SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE A MEMBER OF THE PANEL.

ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO COME OUT OF MAYORAL CONTROL IS SCHOOL-BASED PARENT COORDINATORS. HOWEVER, WE RECOMMEND THAT THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS BE PART OF THE PROCESS BY INTERVIEWING PROSPECTIVE PARENT COORDINATORS, AND MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SCHOOL'S PRINCIPAL. THE PRINCIPAL WOULD THEN MAKE THE FINAL SELECTION, DRAWING FROM A LIST COMPILED BY THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM.

AS SOMEONE WHO HAS SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF A C-E-C, I HAVE FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROS AND CONS OF EACH SYSTEM. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT ANY CANDIDATE FOR THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCILS SHOULD BE A PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF A CHILD ATTENDING A SCHOOL IN THAT DISTRICT, AND THAT INCLUDES CHARTER SCHOOLS. THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT RECOMMENDS THE ADOPTION OF A BETTER ELECTION PROCESS — ONE THAT WILL HAVE A FORM OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION. THIS WILL

GUARANTEE THAT ALL PARENTS WILL BE ABLE TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN EMPOWERED C-E-C'S.

OF COURSE, WE BELIEVE THAT BOROUGH PRESIDENTS SHOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE TWO APPOINTMENTS TO THE C-E-C'S. WE BELIEVE THAT THE C-E-C'S MUST VOTE TO APPROVE ANY SITES FOR NEW SCHOOLS, THE RECONFIGURATION OF EXISTING SCHOOLS, AND THE OPENING AND CLOSING OF SCHOOLS.

THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT HAS ENORMOUS RESPECT FOR MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND CHANCELLOR KLEIN, AND APPLAUDS THEM FOR MAKING EDUCATION A PRIORITY. HE BELIEVES THAT WE MUST REAUTHORIZE MAYORAL CONTROL, AND IMPROVE IT! PARENTS MUST HAVE A SAY IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION. AMENDING THE GOVERNANCE LAW WILL NOT ONLY STRENGTHEN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION — IT WILL ENSURE THAT WE CONTINUE TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS BELONG TO THE PUBLIC. A PUBLIC SCHOOL IS A PUBLIC TRUST THAT MUST BE VALIDATED BY OPENNESS. INFORMATION ABOUT ANY SCHOOL THAT RECEIVES PUBLIC MONEY MUST BE SHARED WITH BOTH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND THE PUBLIC-AT-

LARGE AND MUST ALWAYS BE SUBJECT TO COMMENTARY. WE HOPE THIS BECOMES PART OF THE NEW LAW.

FINALLY, ON BEHALF OF THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT, I WOULD LIKE TO REITERATE THAT HIS COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC EDUCATION IS A COMMITMENT TO SHARED PUBLIC GOALS. THAT IS WHY WE BELIEVE THAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS MUST BE GOVERNED BY THOSE CLOSEST TO THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE ASSEMBLY WILL RECOGNIZE THAT MAYORAL CONTROL HAS BEEN GOOD FOR NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS — AND THAT REAUTHORIZING THE LAW WITH THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS WILL MAKE OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM A MODEL FOR THE REST OF THE NATION.

AND WE STRONGLY URGE THAT THE ASSEMBLY, WHEN AMENDING THE LAW, USE VERY SPECIFIC LANGUAGE, SO THAT THE LAW WILL NOT BE SUBJECT TO MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS.