

New York Equity Coalition

June 14, 2022

The Honorable Betty A. Rosa
Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York
New York State Education Building
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Commissioner Rosa:

The New York Equity Coalition is deeply concerned about a [proposed amendment](#) that would weaken requirements for earning a local diploma in New York State. The proposed amendment would allow students unable to pass a Regents exam OR be approved under the [special appeal process](#) passed by the Regents in May to earn a local diploma through a new “special determination” process.

Our Coalition recognizes the significant challenges that students and families across the state have faced over the past several years. However, lowering graduation requirements will result in more students unprepared to succeed in college or career, exacerbating the systemic inequalities that plague our state and nation.

We believe the recent special appeal process approved by the Regents provides more than enough flexibility for students affected by the pandemic to earn a local diploma. Expanding these loopholes only widens the rigor gap between a Regents and Local diploma and makes the local diploma less attractive to colleges and employers.

Furthermore, weakening requirements for a local diploma sends the wrong message to our students, who will have less incentive to work hard and pass the exam. Combined with the recent decisions to cancel the History Regents exam and provide more graduation exemptions, the proposed amendment creates a slippery slope that diminishes New York’s long history of educational rigor and accountability and could be viewed as another step in eliminating the Regents exams altogether.

Finally, we are concerned that the proposed amendment links two separate issues as valid reasons to request a “special determination”. While we agree that students unable to take the exam due to Covid deserve flexibility, we fail to see the connection between a deadly illness and the inability to score at least a 50% as determined by the special appeal process.

We urge you to reject this proposed amendment and look forward to our continued partnership to make New York’s education system more equitable for all students.