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November 20, 2024

Dr. Betty A. Rosa, Commissioner of Education
New York State Education Building
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Commissioner Rosa,

As elected trustees of the Great Neck Public Schools, we have been closely following the recent developments regarding the New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Regionalization Plan ("Regionalization Plan"). We are writing to express our strong opposition to the Regionalization Plan because, as the regulation is currently written, school districts are required to participate without consent of their duly elected Boards of Education.

We understand that NYSED has sought to ameliorate this concern through the subsequent release of FAQs. The inconsistency, however, between the language in the regulation and FAQs has caused major concerns among our Board, Administration, and within our community. Accordingly, we urge NYSED to amend the language of the regulation governing the Regionalization Plan to state explicitly that participation is voluntary, without penalty.

We have long appreciated our productive partnerships with both the State Education Department and our Nassau County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), which have been essential in supporting our district's mission and expanding educational opportunities for our students. We also enjoy a strong and supportive relationship with Nassau BOCES and our Nassau BOCES District Superintendents, past and present.

Even more, our district has been a leader in engaging in resource sharing and collaboration voluntarily, driven by local needs and mutual benefits as they arose. This process has allowed us to work collaboratively with neighboring districts through BOCES without the need for a formalized mandate. Consistent with this precedent, we intend to continue sharing ideas and collaborating with any other districts in ways that maximize student outcomes.

That said, we are concerned with and therefore oppose the Regionalization Plan, in its current form, because it potentially jeopardizes local control of our schools or redistributes taxpayer dollars and resources to other jurisdictions. Maintaining complete and total local control in the governance of all district operations is of the utmost importance to our community. Our Board was elected to provide the oversight necessary to maintain a standard of excellence that is expected by Great Neck residents. We take that responsibility very seriously and oppose any efforts to shift this oversight to any outside individual or agency. As a result, and once again, we urge NYSED to amend the proposed regulation such that it explicitly states that participation in the Regionalization Plan is on a voluntary basis, without penalty.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns. We look forward to a continued dialogue on this important matter and finding pathways that align with our shared goal of maximizing opportunities for all Great Neck Public School students.

Sincerely,

Grant Toch, President
on behalf of the Board of Education