

Elementary & Secondary Education Budget Hearing
Testimony of Au Hogan, Parent Advocate StudentsFirstNY
Tuesday, February 3rd, 2015

Good morning, Assemblymen, Assemblywomen, Senators, my name is Au Hogan and it is a pleasure being here this morning. That pleasure however is greeted with the sad reality of a concern I have for the continued failing practices allowed in our inner city schools. I am a district public school parent and grandparent from Jamaica, Queens. My children, grandchildren and I all went through the New York City public school system.

I joined StudentsFirstNY as a parent member and I am here today because I want, I demand change!

Our education system needs real change ... fundamental reform ... the kind of reform that Governor Cuomo outlined last month in his State of the State presentation. I support the Governor's plan because he understands that the same old status quo is failing too many kids.

There is an ongoing crisis in public education, and it is not just here in New York State.

America's public education system once touted as the best in the world, has fallen far behind systems that at one time modeled their own systems after ours. And if we don't act, now, that fall will continue, and future generations of school children will suffer. The classroom, once a place of great hope and promise, has become a place of gloom, fear and an unspeakable despair.

You might not understand that or understand the immediacy of this crisis if you've never been to communities that are similar to mine. From Jamaica, to Bed-Stuy, from the South Bronx to Crown Heights, to inner-city Rochester and Buffalo – in our neighborhoods, parents look to public education as a lifeline for our kids.

Lifelines that we rely on to help prepare them for the future and for greater opportunity. But for too many kids, the path to opportunity is blocked; blocked by an education system in desperate need of fundamental reform to turn things around.

My grandson Dre is an example of a child who is being failed by our broken education system. Every year, the possibility of him achieving a successful future seems more and more impossible.

Dre's a good kid with a loving family that values learning. He's not an outlier. He's your regular, mainstream kid who this system should have no problem educating.

Dre wakes up each morning and goes to his district public school and day after day he gets 100s on his classroom work. But when it comes time to take the tests – you know, the ones that really tell you whether a kid is ready for the next grade – he gets zeroes. He is not being prepared for the future he deserves.

I understand that teaching is a hard job. However, educators are entrusted with the responsibility of guiding entire generations of kids, and these kids are owed the chance to learn from effective teachers, and a system that works *for* them, not *against* them.

If we don't hold the system up to higher standards by continually improving upon our schools and the teaching profession, we will continue to fail kids all across New York, and all across this great country.

I am here today to represent the many parents and grandparents like myself who believe that taking the necessary steps to reform our education system must happen now.

Governor Cuomo is right – “education is the great equalizer”. But as I mentioned previously, if we continue to follow the same failed policies of the past, we will continue to fail our children. Our children deserve better. My grandson deserves better.

I am proud to stand in support of the Governor because he is fighting for kids across the state, kids just like my grandson. Every child should have access to a school where they have a real opportunity to reach their full potential.

Thank You.