



## THE COALITION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### Statement on Mayoral Control Legislation August 14, 2009

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF), the nation's only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization, is *cautiously optimistic* about the recently signed legislation that restored Mayoral Control of New York City public schools.

#### Background

On August 11, 2009, Governor Paterson signed legislation that restored Mayoral Control of New York City public schools. First introduced in 2002, Mayoral Control gave Mayor Bloomberg the power to name the chancellor and have complete control over the school system's budget and education policy. Mayoral Control was set to sunset in June 2009. With a sunset provision for June 2015, the current legislation has restored Mayoral Control for six more years.

CACF worked closely with parents and youth of the Asian Pacific American community and collaboratively with over 25 organizations of the Campaign for Better Schools to strengthen Mayoral Control. Specifically, the campaign developed three recommendations to improve Mayoral Control: 1) improve checks and balances, 2) increase transparency of financial and academic reporting, and 2) empower parental engagement in schools.

#### Mayoral Control Legislation of 2009

The State Legislature made some noteworthy changes to Mayoral Control, including improvements to transparency and parent involvement. There were some minor changes as well, such as limiting the Mayor's authority over school closures and contracts. However, these changes are small and fail to fully integrate a system of checks and balances. Among the changes to Mayoral Control, CACF is highlighting the following changes that are most relevant to community organizations, advocacy organizations, parents, and youth.

- **Greater Transparency:** The legislation gives the Independent Budget Office authority to review the financial and academic data collection produced by the NYC Department of Education. Advocates and parents will be able to monitor how money is allocated and spent. Given our concerns with current data collection and reporting, CACF supports this independent audit of the academic progress of students.
- **Increased Parent Engagement:** The legislation establishes a citywide independent parent center to be operated by City University of New York in each of the five boroughs with an appropriation of \$80,000, training parents become more involved in the school decisionmaking process. CACF believes in supporting parents, especially immigrant and limited English proficient parents, to be better partners in our schools.
- **Focus on English Language Learners:** The legislation establishes a citywide council to focus on English Language Learner (ELL) issues. ELLs have the lowest graduation rate of all high school students in New York City, with only one in four ELLs graduating high school in four years. Asian Pacific Americans make up 20% of the ELL student population. CACF believes that focusing on ELLs can lead to significant resources to ensure that schools are equipped to address ELL needs and stop the high dropout rates.
- **Other Provisions:** The new legislation also provides additional oversight and focus on high schools and arts education. Schools are also required to hold annual meetings on school safety matters and provide parents a space to discuss school safety in their community. CACF supports these provisions.

Although these changes are a step forward in strengthening Mayoral Control, CACF believes that there needs to be 1) more substantial changes to checks and balances and 2) greater investment of resources to ELL students and parent engagement in order to improve the New York City public school system. CACF is committed to advocating for policies and programs that will ensure all students receive a quality education.