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February 6, 2018

The Honorable Betty Rosa, Chancellor
NYS Education Department
State Education Building
89 Washington Ave.
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Chancellor Rosa,

The recent testing data breach offers an opportunity to thoroughly review computer based testing and its impact on students. In addition to our concerns about the data breach, we have received a number of questions from the field that should be addressed before computer based testing is expanded further. We urge you to have the department conduct a study to answer the following questions:

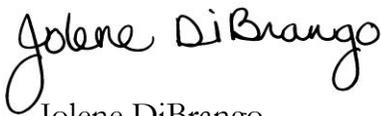
- Does the method of testing, computer based versus paper and pencil, affect student outcomes on the test?
- Are students in grades 3-5 at a disadvantage in taking the tests on a computer because their computer skills are just developing?
- Does reading text on a computer screen for students in grades 3-5 cause eye strain and fatigue?
- Are all students able to receive all of their testing modifications with computer based testing?
- Do students in grades 3-5 have the keyboarding skills necessary to be successful on computer based testing?
- Does the disparity in access to computers at home have any impact on student performance on computer based testing at all grade levels?
- Are the use of computers in testing a measure of a student's knowledge or their ability to use a computer?
- Do high wealth communities have an advantage in computer based testing because of their students' access to technology at home?
- Will the need to offer keyboarding and digital interface (e.g. scrolling through a window, copying and pasting, dragging and dropping items) instruction diminish the time spent on instruction in the core subjects or eliminate programs such as the arts?

All of these questions should be answered before the state continues to expand the use of computer based testing. These equity concerns among districts must be answered before these test scores are used in making decisions about school accountability and teacher evaluations.

The reality is that districts in New York do not have consistently similar technology infrastructures to fully support the administration of computer-based exams, and access to technology at home and in school varies dramatically for children across the state. A number of research studies have been conducted on “mode effect” with results that are concerning. Studies show that students tend to do better on paper-based assessments, especially in ELA and in upper grade math. Some findings indicate that the use of computer-based exams could widen the achievement gap since high performing students tend to score better on computer-based than paper-based but low and middle performing students did not similarly benefit from the computer based format.

I would be happy to discuss these concerns with you. We stand prepared to assist the department with this critical study. The following link provides an article in *Education Week* on the studies <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/02/23/comparing-paper-and-computer-testing-7-key.html?r=1415302134>

Sincerely,



Jolene DiBrango
Executive Vice President

c: Members of the New York State Board of Regents
MaryEllen Elia, Commissioner, New York Education Department