

SAMPLE PETITION OR LETTER

Dear _____

The Governor has proposed a misguided, billionaire agenda for our public schools – focused on testing, privatization and unfair funding. It is becoming increasingly clear that he is intent on significantly diminishing the local, democratic control that has been the foundation of our public school system. Our focus must be on providing what students need and ensuring every child has a quality public school.

We need a budget that helps teachers do their jobs. The reality is that half of the state's school districts today have less state aid than in 2008. The state has still not fulfilled its obligations in the CFE case. With a \$5 billion surplus, this is the year to address funding shortfalls and correct glaring inequities. We are calling on legislators to approve a \$2.2 billion state aid increase, end the GAP Elimination Adjustment; make good on districts' prior-year claims; invest in statewide universal pre-kindergarten; embrace community schools; reduce class sizes; and reject any attempt to increase the impact of state standardized testing.

It's time for serious discussions about the real issues: the devastating impact of poverty on student achievement; inequalities in how state aid is distributed and the chronic under-funding of public education. Statistics show that New York is one of the worst states in the country when it comes to unequal funding between rich and poor districts, and under Andrew Cuomo, the problem of unequal funding has only grown worse. Schools in poorer districts spent \$8,733 per pupil less than those from wealthier ones, an inequity that grew by nearly 9% from before Cuomo took office.

Gov. Cuomo pushed for a rushed implementation of the new Common Core Standards, including testing students on the new standards before teachers were given a curriculum or support for teaching the new standards. Cuomo is now unfairly blaming teachings for students' low scores. Now Gov. Cuomo wants to double the weighting of those same Common Core tests in teacher evaluation. These revisions, if enacted, will exacerbate teaching to the test, continuing narrowing of curriculum, and drive career teachers away from our schools. Such proposals indicate that Governor Cuomo has broken their promise to reduce the focus on testing and be an advocate for students.

In addition, charter schools, which were meant to be a place to try new innovative methods, have instead become a multi-billion dollar industry that selectively choose children while siphoning much needed educational resources from public education.

I demand that you act to reverse course and institute education standards and proven policies that are in the best interest of all students and communities.

We call on Gov. Cuomo (and our legislators) to visit our schools (public forums) to learn what our kids need — from the people who know each child by name.

