



Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc.



Alliance for Quality Education

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

CONTACT:

Jean Laopus/CFE 212-867-8455, x 214
Billy Easton/AQE 518-461-9171

**CFE AND AQE EXPRESS STRONG OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSED FINAL REGULATIONS
EXCLUDING EDUCATION ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS FROM PARTICIPATING
IN CONTRACT FOR EXCELLENCE DEVELOPMENT**

Organizations Urge Commissioner Mills to Revise Regulations

Albany, NY – The Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. (CFE) and the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE) issued a letter to Richard P. Mills, NYS Commissioner of Education, urging him to reconsider the proposed final regulations surrounding Section 211-d[4] of the Education Budget and Reform Act of 2007-2008, which concerns the “public process” for development of Contracts for Excellence.

Citing their organizations’ leading roles in the development and enactment of the law, CFE and AQE charge that the New York State Education Department’s proposed final regulations misinterpret the law and severely limit and undermine one of its basic tenets: expansive public participation to ensure that the voice and the views of the public are given an active and substantial role in determining how the new education resources are effectively utilized to achieve the goal of academic excellence for all public school children. Despite limited statewide inclusion of the public in the first year of the Contract, the input of CFE, AQE and other education reform organizations and members of the public had a substantial impact on the 2007-2008 approval process.

“As the organizations whose fight for educational equity inspired the enactment of the Contract for Excellence legislation, we are baffled by SED’s attempt to preclude our participation in the development of the Contracts themselves. We strongly urge the Commissioner to revise the draft regulations to enable educational advocacy organizations, such as CFE and AQE, to participate in the “public process” called for by law. Any other result would run counter to the plain terms and purpose of the statute itself,” said Geri D. Palast, Executive Director of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

AQE Executive Director Billy Easton added, “It is simply outrageous that the Commissioner of Education would shut the door on taxpayers and community organizations when it comes to their right to speak at a public hearing on the Contracts for Excellence. We know from this past year’s Contracts that the State Education Department failed to enforce their own public participation regulations. Instead of strengthening the regulations to fully enforce the law, now they seem to be determined to enact into regulations restrictions on public testimony that will exclude the voices of many.”

More information and the full text of the letter available at www.cfequity.org.

#####