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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NYSUT Board approves “no confidence” resolution

ALBANY, N.Y. Jan. 25, 2014 – New York State United Teachers’ Board of Directors approved a resolution Saturday that declared “no confidence” in the policies of State Education Commissioner John King Jr., therefore calling for his removal by the Board of Regents. NYSUT’s board also withdrew its support for the Common Core standards as implemented and interpreted in New York state until SED makes major course corrections to its failed implementation plan and supports a three-year moratorium on high-stakes consequences from standardized testing.

The union’s board acted unanimously Saturday morning at a meeting in Albany.

“Educators understand that introducing new standards, appropriate curriculum and meaningful assessments are ongoing aspects of a robust educational system. These are complex tasks made even more complex when attempted during a time of devastating budget cuts. SED’s implementation plan in New York state has failed. The commissioner has pursued policies that repeatedly ignore the voices of parents and educators who have identified problems and called on him to move more thoughtfully,” said NYSUT President Richard C. Iannuzzi. “Instead of listening to and trusting parents and teachers to know and do what’s right for students, the commissioner has offered meaningless rhetoric and token change. Instead of making the major course corrections that are clearly needed, including backing a three-year moratorium on high-stakes consequences for students and teachers from state testing, he has labeled everyone and every meaningful recommendation as distractions.”

The resolution states that the board declares “no confidence in the policies of the Commissioner of Education and calls for the New York State Commissioner of Education’s removal by the New York State Board of Regents.”

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NYSUT Vice President Maria Neira said the union has been sounding warning bells since 2011 about the over-emphasis on standardized testing and the state's rushed and unrealistic timeline for introducing curriculum and assessments tied to the Common Core state standards. She said NYSUT is seeking:

- completion of all modules, or lessons, aligned with the Common Core and time for educators to review them to ensure they are grade-level appropriate and aligned with classroom practice;
- better engagement with parents, including listening to their concerns about their children's needs;
- additional tools, professional development and resources for teachers to address the needs of diverse learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners;
- full transparency in state testing, including the release of all test questions, so teachers can use them in improving instruction;
- postponement of Common Core Regents exams as a graduation requirement;
- the funding necessary to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the Common Core standards. The proposed Executive Budget would leave nearly 70 percent of the state's school districts with less state aid in 2014-15 than they had in 2009-10; and
- a moratorium, or delay, in the high-stakes consequences for students and teachers from standardized testing to give the State Education Department — and school districts — more time to correctly implement the Common Core.

“The clock is ticking and time is running out,” Neira said. Students sit for a new battery of state assessments in just a few months. It's time to hit the ‘pause button’ on high stakes while, at the same time, increasing support for students, parents and educators. A moratorium on high-stakes consequences would give SED and school districts time to make the necessary adjustments.”

The resolution will go to the more than 2,000 delegates to the 600,000-member union's Representative Assembly, to be held April 4-6 in New York City. The resolution underscores NYSUT's longstanding, strong opposition to corporate influence and privatization in public education and calls for an end to New York's participation in InBloom, a “cloud-based” system that would collect and store sensitive data on New York's schoolchildren.

New York State United Teachers is a statewide union with more than 600,000 members. Members are pre-K-12 teachers; school-related professionals; higher education faculty; other professionals in education, human services and health care; and retirees. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.