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**TESTIMONY OF NEW YORK STATE SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY
COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION REGARDING SCHOOL CLASS SIZE REDUCTION**

FEBRUARY 28, 2020

My name is Brad Hoylman and I am the State Senator representing New York's 27th Senate District, which includes the neighborhoods of Clinton/Hell's Kitchen, Chelsea, Times Square, Greenwich Village, Midtown/East Midtown, the East Village, Columbus Circle, the Lower East Side, and the Upper West Side. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the New York City Council Committee on Education regarding school class size reduction.

As the elected representative for a district with thousands of families with young children, this issue is a primary concern for my constituents. And as a public school parent of two young daughters, this issue is also personal. My constituents and my children deserve every opportunity to succeed in school and class size is an integral factor that determines a student's success.

The benefits of smaller classes are numerous, observable, and empirically proven. We know from ongoing research that larger class sizes result in worse educational outcomes for most students. Small class size is an essential ingredient in a "sound basic education", which is the constitutional right of every child in New York State. Yet, children in New York City are denied this right in large part due to excessive class sizes.

A 2006 decision by the State's highest court even stated this explicitly, resulting in the Contracts for Excellence (C4E) law, which was passed by New York State in 2007. In exchange for additional funding, this law required the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to improve schools largely by reducing class size over five years. The law contained specific class size goals which varied by grade level and needed to be met by 2011. Many hoped that this law would finally move the needle on this problem that impacts all New York City students and families.

Despite over \$2 billion in cumulative aid since the law's inception, class sizes have continued to rise.¹ According to DOE's own data, the average class size across New York City was 26.3 students, which is greater than any of the goals set in the 2007 C4E law for any grade level. This is unacceptable and must be rectified.

It must be noted that Albany bears much responsibility for these issues. I have spent the last several years in the State Legislature, including now with my dedicated colleague Robert Jackson who founded the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, fighting to ensure that New York City receives all the money it is owed by the state under CFE's lawsuit. We still have yet to see these debts fully repaid under an enacted budget. That has to change and soon. Albany cannot keep telling our children to wait another year for the education they deserve.

Reducing class size would benefit the performance and wellbeing of those who need it most, including low income and minority students and those with special needs. This is especially important when children are younger so that concerns can be addressed early before they compound. A 2011 paper published by the Brookings Institution stated "...it appears that very large class-size reductions, on the order of magnitude of 7-10 fewer students per class, can have significant long-term effects on student achievement and other meaningful outcomes. These effects seem to be largest when introduced in the earliest grades, and for students from less advantaged family backgrounds."²

Even the most competent and effective teachers cannot successfully teach and address the needs of each and every student in an overcrowded classroom because they cannot give everyone the attention they deserve. Overcrowded classrooms not only set up students to fail but also their teachers who cannot succeed in this environment.

I was extremely fortunate to have access to a world-class education. I want this for my children, constituents, and City. I strongly believe that our city needs to meet the challenges of systemic overcrowding and large class sizes. The impacts of education are long-lasting and extend well beyond the students we educate to those they touch in their lives and the contributions they make to our community and world – a community we must build together.

¹ <https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/FAQ-C4E-Final2.pdf>

² <https://www.brookings.edu/research/class-size-what-research-says-and-what-it-means-for-state-policy/>