



June 19, 2018

Public Advocate James  
1 Centre Street  
15 Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

Comptroller Stringer  
1 Centre St #530  
New York, NY 10007

To Public Advocate James and Comptroller Stringer:

We are calling on the offices of the Public Advocate and City Comptroller to open an investigation into the city's failure to respond adequately to complaints regarding the failure of specific yeshivas to satisfy the basic educational standards required by state law. We are alarmed that the Mayor's Office and the Department of Education (DOE) have repeatedly demonstrated an unwillingness to seriously address these complaints, placing politics above a child's right to a high-quality education.

Nearly three years ago, the Department of Education announced an investigation into thirty-nine yeshivas for failing to meet the most basic educational standards. Advocates, like Yaffed, have raised the alarm that yeshivas routinely deny students a fundamental education in English, math, science, and history. It is unclear what investigation the DOE has actually conducted in the intervening years. The DOE has made several public promises to produce a report on its findings, but no report has been released. Recent attempts to change state law do not excuse the city's inaction and the unwarranted delay.

This, we believe, demonstrates that despite their repeated claims of an ongoing investigation, Mayor de Blasio and the DOE are instead dragging their feet and jeopardizing the futures of tens of thousands of New York City children.

The depth and breadth of the problem should not be understated. Nearly 60,000 children attend a Hasidic yeshiva in New York City. If yeshivas were their own school district, they'd be the second largest district in the state of New York- second only to New York City. Collectively, yeshivas educate more students than 99.8% of school districts including Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers.

The offices of the Public Advocate and City Comptroller are uniquely positioned and empowered to investigate the Mayor's Office and the DOE's lack of substantive progress on this issue.

It is deeply troubling that the mayor has failed to remedy an ongoing and glaring example of systemic educational neglect and malpractice. New York's education law is very clear: nonpublic schools are required to provide an education that is "substantially equivalent" to that of public schools.

And yet, most Hasidic boys under age thirteen receive a paltry amount of instruction in English and math each week. Students are frequently taught by unqualified teachers while other core subjects are simply not taught at all. Boys thirteen and older receive no secular education at all.

An overwhelming majority of the nearly 60,000 students in yeshivas are being denied access to a basic education. The time for playing politics is over. We strongly urge both offices to use their oversight and audit powers to conduct a thorough investigation into the egregious mishandling of this issue.

We look forward to your timely reply,

  
Susan Lerner  
Executive Director of Common Cause/NY



Naftuli Moster  
Executive Director of YAFFED



Ann Tobak  
Executive Director of the Workmen's Circle