

Commissioner MaryEllen Elia
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12234

Chancellor Betty A. Rosa
12th Judicial District Regents
Office
State Education Building
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, N.Y. 12234

To Commissioner Elia and Chancellor Rosa:

Under New York State law all non-public schools must provide a "substantially equivalent" education to public schools. To that end, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) correctly established reasonable, revised guidelines that would have provided much needed oversight to ensure that non-public schools are in compliance with state law. However, on April 19th, an Albany Supreme Court judge struck down the guidelines on administrative grounds, after a consortium of yeshivas, catholic and elite private schools sued to evade oversight.

We are now writing to urge the state to pursue emergency regulations under Section 202(6) of the New York State Administrative Procedure Act ("Notice of Emergency Adoption").

The decades long neglect of secular education at various ultra-Orthodox yeshivas is a crisis affecting tens of thousands of students each year.

All children, regardless of religion, deserve equal access to a fair and basic education. And yet every year students graduate from these yeshivas without the ability to read or write in English, and little to no understanding of science, math, history or civics. According to a report produced by YAFFED, students currently receive only 90 minutes of secular education in Hasidic boys' elementary schools, and none in high school. Most yeshiva students graduate without a diploma, making it nearly impossible for them to obtain a secondary degree or obtain employment.

For far too long, politicians have put their own interests ahead of students with devastating consequences for individuals and whole communities.

We urge the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to enact emergency regulations now so yeshiva students can finally get the education they deserve.

Their futures depend on it.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Nixon



Zephyr Teachout