



KEVIN S. CASEY
Executive Director

8 Airport Park Boulevard
Latham, New York 12110

Phone: (518) 782-0600
Fax: (518) 782-9552

www.saanys.org

January 24, 2017

VIA FAX AND CERTIFIED MAIL

The Honorable Charles Schumer
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schumer,

On behalf of the School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS) I would like to express our opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education. SAANYS represents over 7,000 school leaders in over 400 school districts throughout the state. We waited to formulate our final position until after Ms. DeVos' public hearings so as to have as much information as possible. After due deliberation by the SAANYS Board of Directors, we submit that Ms. DeVos is neither qualified for the position of Secretary of Education, nor professionally or personally inclined to support and champion public schools, which have long been acknowledged as a foundation of our democratic society.

The position of Secretary of Education requires the command of educational issues that cut across all levels and areas of education. The Secretary of Education must have a working knowledge of the intersection and boundaries of state and federal educational roles and the educational needs of all children. Ms. DeVos' responses to questions on special and higher education, school finance, regulatory structures, and current educational laws and regulations fell well below acceptable levels of proficiency for consideration as a viable candidate for the position of Secretary of Education. Despite never attending a public school, or working in one in any capacity, or sending her children to public school, she has demonstrated a hostility toward public education inconsistent with the responsibilities of the office to which she has been nominated.

It also appears that Ms. DeVos' nomination was advanced due to her focused work on school choice. School choice emerged on the educational landscape as a way to bring competition and marketplace strategies to public school systems, as if such strategies would be a panacea for improved educational outcomes. Instead, school choice promotes an environment where the interests of school children are forced to compete with the interests of shareholders. Public schools did not and do not need any more competition. For too long public schools have had to compete for scarce resources and respond to ever-changing political agendas. Instead of competition, school districts in New York need a Secretary of Education who will fully support public education over the privatization of education.

Public school districts in New York are struggling with an uneven playing field when it comes to school choice. Redirected funding, loss of students and inequitable accountability measures place public schools in our state at an unfair disadvantage and create a very unpredictable climate for school leaders. The redirection of Title I monies to fund a national voucher program will only exacerbate this situation. Yet, in the face of these many challenges, public schools consistently demonstrate better student results when compared to charter schools, while accepting all, and not just a select few.

We respectfully request that you join us in our opposition of Ms. DeVos as Secretary of Education. We expect our state, district, building and program leaders to be highly qualified, and that same standard should be applied to the Secretary of Education. Thank you for your support and continued leadership on behalf of the students and school leaders in New York.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin S. Casey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin S. Casey
Executive Director

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

Ms. JoAnn Bartoletti, Executive Director
National Association of Secondary School Principals

Ms. Gail Connelly, Executive Director
National Association of Elementary School Principals

