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February 15, 2018

Carmen Fariña
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 320
New York, NY 10007-1222

RE: Proposed closure of PS/MS 42 in School District 27

Dear Chancellor Fariña:

I request the withdrawal of the proposal to close PS/MS 42 from the Panel for Education Policy (PEP) February 28, 2018 agenda. This school has made great strides to improve as part of the Renewal Schools program, and I believe we should afford them further time and our support to succeed. At a minimum, the item should be held over until we can further evaluate the progress the school is making as indicated by this year's assessments. This will also allow stakeholders additional time to share their concerns with the Department of Education.

The local support for this school is clear. My office has been inundated with phone calls regarding concerns from parents, teachers and students requesting to maintain PS/MS 42 as an operating community school. In addition, hundreds of parents, teachers and students turned up to oppose the planned closure at public hearings held in the community by the Department of Education. Furthermore, on February 8, 2018 many stakeholders participated in a rally held on the steps of Borough Hall opposing the closure.

If the Department of Education's intention to close PS/MS 42 because of low test scores it is unsupported by the facts. PS/MS 42 scored the highest out of twenty K-8 schools in the Renewal Schools program and is "Meeting Target" in the metric rating percentage of students at level 3 and 4 in ELA while the other schools that are not slated for closure have scored lower and are not even "Meeting Target". In addition, PS/MS 42 also has the largest percentage point growth from 2014 to 2017 combined in Math and ELA, the highest percentage rate for rigorous instruction at 86% and the highest percentage of teacher attendance at 97.3% compared to all of the New York City K-8 renewal schools.

A closure of PS/MS 42 is not justified for the aforementioned reasons and I am requesting the proposal be withdrawn. I thank you in advance for your consideration and I await your response.

Sincerely,

Melinda Katz
President
Borough of Queens

CC: Congressman Gregory Meeks, State Senator James Sanders, Assemblywoman Michele Titus, Assemblywoman Audrey Pheffer-Amato, Council Donovan Richards, Panel for Education Policy Representatives