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Executive Director

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TESTIMONY

by the

NEW YORK CAMPAIGN FOR ACHIEVEMENT NOW

Derrell Bradford, Executive Director

to the

**NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE &
ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES**

JOINT HEARING ON THE 2016-17 EXECUTIVE BUDGET – TAXES

Supporting Education Scholarship Tax Credit Proposals

My name is Derrell Bradford, and I am the Executive Director of NYCAN: The New York Campaign for Achievement Now. NYCAN is a member of a national network of state-based advocacy groups fighting to enact research-based education reforms that will give every child in their state access to a great school. - See more at: <http://nycan.org/who-we-are/about-50can#sthash.2wJ9jrHC.dpuf>

NYCAN supports the Governor's Education Tax Credit proposal because we believe "Now" is one of the most powerful words in any language. Immediacy—the ability to not wait—has an impact that can never be underestimated.

The Governor's Education Tax Credit proposal, which will allow taxpayers to claim a tax credit for eligible contributions to public schools, school improvement organizations, local education funds and educational scholarship organizations, brings the power of "now" to families looking for more choices and better options for the education of their children, and creates an opportunity for school districts to raise additional funds for new programming and staff, especially in those areas vulnerable to budget cuts like art, music, tutoring and sports.

Right now there is a child attending a school that does not work for him or her somewhere in this state. And in many cases there is an independent or parochial school right down the street, or around the corner, that would offer that same child an excellent

education and a chance at a prosperous and free future. But for many working class and low-income families, tuition is too high a barrier between their child and an excellent education. Education and income are closely linked, so it's also worth noting that this tuition barrier does not exist for wealthier New Yorkers, who can afford to pay nonpublic school tuition or the mortgage or rent necessary to access an expensive school district. As a child who was a scholarship recipient myself I will offer that how much money your parents make should not determine whether or not you go to a school that is the right fit for you.

Even as we are great believers in educational opportunity at NYCAN, we know there are also bright and talented people in our traditional district schools who are ready to drive innovation therein.

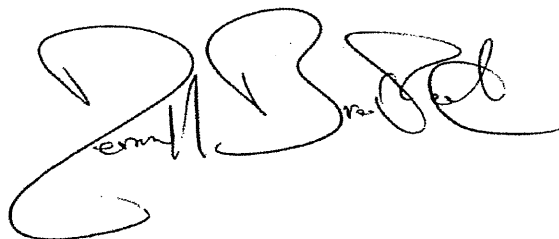
The Governor's tax credit proposal, and similar proposals in the legislature—one of which has already been passed as a stand-alone piece of legislation by the state senate — make both of these instances a priority.

State governments across the country—and especially here in New York—use tax credits for many things, from real estate development to filmmaking. The Education Scholarship Tax Credit proposal allows us to use this same tool to empower families and protect programs in our education system.

What could be a better use of this tool than to invest in the immediacy of educational opportunities for our students, while creating a lever for those who are trying to support great programs for our district systems? With this proposal, all of our children win.

Members of the committee, I urge you to enact all of these proposals during the current budget cycle. Change never comes easily and there is never a perfect time to do anything; but there are times that are better than others to do what is right for our children and our teachers and to expand our capacity to ensure that every child in the Empire State receives a quality education. If there is any doubt in your minds I want to assure you: the time to do these things is indeed right now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derrell Bradford". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "B".

Derrell Bradford
Executive Director
NYCAN: The New York Campaign for Achievement Now
2/2/16