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August 17, 2023

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Dr. Betty Rosa
Commissioner of Education and
President of University of the State of New York
New York State Education Building
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Commissioner Rosa:

On behalf of the Lower Hudson Educational Coalition, representing the 77 school districts, 239,000 students, and 1.7 million community members in Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland, and Westchester counties, we thank you for your leadership and support.

We request your help in a matter of concern among our local school districts and the local Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). Specifically, under the Substantial Equivalency Guidelines adopted by the Regents in September of 2022, local school districts are required to provide New York State Education Department with a list of the nonpublic schools within the district borders and the date of their last substantial equivalency determination by September 1, 2023.

Given the diversity and volume of nonpublic schools, this task is especially challenging to complete within the mandated timeline. It is further complicated from an informational standpoint as the public schools are responsible for providing detailed information that is the purview of the nonpublic school. From an operational and accountability standpoint we believe the onus should be on the nonpublic schools to provide the information to the school district. This will ensure correct information is provided by the nonpublic school seeking the certification.

Therefore, we ask that the State Education Department direct the nonpublic schools to provide the required information to the public schools. We are happy to help facilitate this adjustment, but we believe it more appropriately suits the situation.