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October 15, 2007

Chancellor Joel Klein
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 320
New York, NY 10007

Chancellor Matthew Goldstein
The City University of New York
535 East 80th Street
New York, NY 10075

Dear Chancellors Klein and Goldstein:

As Chairperson of the New York City Council Education Committee, I am writing to voice my opposition to Hunter College's proposal to acquire the Julia Richman Education Complex (JREC) from the New York City Department of Education (DOE). While I recognize and support the needs of Hunter and CUNY to create a state-of-the-art science education facility, I concur with my colleague Jessica Lappin, Council Member for the community in which both Hunter and JREC are located, that the plan to construct such a facility on the JREC site is inappropriate.

For more than a year I have kept an open mind and listened to those on both sides of this issue. I have had meetings with the President of Hunter College, Jennifer Raab, DOE officials and representatives from JREC and the surrounding community. In addition, I have received many letters and emails on this issue and, except for a few from those affiliated with Hunter, those who have written overwhelmingly opposed Hunter's plan to relocate JREC downtown.

Due to local development and population growth, the community in which JREC is located faces a looming shortage of public school seats, only partially addressed in the DOE's 5-Year Capital Plan, which would be exacerbated if the JREC campus was moved downtown. According to the January 2007 enrollment projections prepared for the DOE by the Grier Partnership, District 2, where JREC is located, is one of only two community school districts that will increase elementary and middle school enrollments by 2010, with further increases projected by 2015. Meanwhile, as per the latest DOE data found in the 2005-06 Blue Book, schools surrounding JREC on the Upper East Side are

already at, near or over capacity. For example, PS 158 is listed at 97% capacity, MS 114 is at 90%, PS 183 is at 113% and PS 290 is currently listed at 166% capacity.

Although Hunter would understandably prefer to have a new science center in close proximity to its central campus, it is not essential. Other institutions have successfully operated with buildings that are outside their main campus without detriment to the education they provide. Hunter could offer shuttle service to transport students from its Brookdale campus, only about 2 miles away, which would not be excessively disruptive.

The bottom line is that the desire not to inconvenience college students is not sufficient reason to demolish and relocate an existing education facility, especially considering that to do so would be a waste of more than \$30 million in public resources that have already been invested in renovations to make JREC a state-of-the-art learning complex.

JREC has become a model of a successful multi-age learning community. This complex of diverse schools has developed strong relations with, and support from, the surrounding neighborhood and cannot be easily uprooted and transplanted elsewhere. Many JREC students are children of those who live or work in the vicinity and the complex features a health center staffed by nearby Mt. Sinai Hospital. The local community also benefits from the use of JREC facilities, such as the auditorium, gymnasiums and swimming pool.

It is my sincere hope that we can finally lay to rest this faulty scheme that pits the interests of one group of students against another and focus attention, instead, on constructing a high quality science education facility for Hunter offsite and making it work for students.

Sincerely,



Robert Jackson

cc: Council Speaker Christine Quinn
Council Member Jessica Lappin
Assemblymember Catherine Nolan
Assemblymember Micah Kellner
State Senator Liz Krueger
Hunter College President Jennifer Raab
SAVE JREC campaign