

Dear _____ Board of Education Members and Administrators,

These past two school years have been unprecedented in the history of our public school system and our district. The Covid pandemic has resulted in overwhelming stress, hardship, and trauma on our students. While our students were spared the added pressure of sitting for the June 2020 and January 2021 regents exams, we have yet to hear if this year's exams will be waived as well. I urge you to pass a "Do No Harm" policy NOW while we await this decision by NYSED.

Under a "Do No Harm" policy, students will still prepare and sit for the upcoming regents exams. The regents exams will still hold high stakes weight of a graduation requirement and will still be listed on every student's HS transcript. However, under this policy, the regents grades will only factor into a student's class grade and GPA if it helps the student. It removes the added stakes of lowering a class grade which is a culmination of 10 months of multiple tests, quizzes, projects, homework, classwork, and papers, based on a single day's snapshot. For test anxiety students, this policy can make the difference between a failing test grade, and the ability to truly demonstrate what they have learned.

NYC, Buffalo, and Albany public schools have never factored regents assessments into GPA's for their over 1,150,000 students. Suburban districts across the state, in Westchester, and here on Long Island are beginning to follow suit. Many initially met with opposition by those fearful that this policy would result in lowered scores and a lack of effort. Thanks to a few brave districts and unions that agreed to take a chance on their students, we see that this is a false and unproven fear, and should not be used as an excuse to continue business as usual in such unprecedented times.

In Bellmore-Merrick, "Safe-Harmless" was passed, and over the next two years regents scores went up or remained the same. Of 10 regent assessment results, overall scores from 6 exams increased by 1-3%. In Comsewogue after implementing this policy, 7 out of 10 regents assessments saw increases of 1-9% proficiency.

The NYS Education Department "does NOT require OR RECOMMEND that schools use Regents examination grades as part of the calculation of the student's final average." (Memo from NYSED dated September 2016). Why then, have we continued with this policy?

I urge you to take this matter up and adopt this policy now, to ensure our students have the same fair and appropriate grading measures as millions of other NY students are afforded. Alleviating this additional and unnecessary pressure with such a simple and reasonable change should be a priority.

Thank You,