



March 22, 2016

Hon. MaryEllen Elia  
NYS Commissioner of Education  
Education Department  
189 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12334

Re: Matter of Ghezzi, *et al*, (February 23, 2015 Complaint)

Dear Commissioner Elia:

We are writing on behalf of the Capital District Chapter of Citizen Action of New York to ask that you dismiss the above pending petition which seeks to invalidate the results of the February 9, 2016 Albany City School District vote. We ask you to rule that the voting results should be upheld and the Albany High School project be allowed to go forward.

Many well-meaning, dedicated parents and school supporters, including Citizen Action staff and volunteers, worked hard and invested personal time and resources to build a big turnout for this vote. Likewise, those in the city and (unfortunately outside the city) who generally oppose spending for public school education, also mobilized their supporters. For many, in favor and opposed, this was the first time they had voted on school issues. The result was an unprecedented turnout for a school election, which made it more challenging than is usual for voters all across the city. We are not used to waiting in line or having to wait for new ballots to arrive.

Remember the long lines in African American communities in the 2008 presidential race, the huge lines at the University at Albany polling site in the November 2012 election, or the day-long lines to vote in South Africa's first presidential election after apartheid. Democratic voters in the State of Maine had to wait for hours to vote in this year's Democratic primary. Exercising the franchise is a cherished right that, unfortunately, sometimes requires extra effort.

There is no proof that any of the irregularities during the course of the February 9 vote were deliberate, intentional or adversely affected any particular group or neighborhood. Despite delays at some polling places, no one was turned away, although some may have chosen not to wait to vote.

In this most significant vote for the future of Albany's public school children, whose success is vital to Albany's future, 7,759 people cast their votes. The proposition was approved by a 189 vote margin. Only 27 people filed complaints – only a handful of whom indicated that they did not or could not vote. We believe this is insufficient justification to invalidate this vote.

We are asking you to uphold the votes of the 7,759 citizens who cast their ballots in support or in opposition to this proposition. We ask the Commissioner of Education to dismiss the Complaint of February 23, 2016, and allow the Albany School Board to continue with the business with providing proper educational facilities for the students of Albany, as the voters of Albany have determined.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

*Ivette Alfonso & Anita Thayer*  
Co-Chairs  
Capital District Chapter  
Citizen Action of New York