



**Parents of Blind Children of New York**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 10, 2014**

**Parents of Blind Children of New York Announces a Town Hall Meeting for  
Parents and Educators of Blind Children**

NEW YORK, NY: The Parents of Blind Children of New York, a Division of the National Federation of the Blind of New York State will be holding a Town Hall Meeting for parents and educators of blind and visually impaired children. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> at 6pm in the auditorium at SELIS MANOR, 135 West 23<sup>rd</sup> St, New York, NY.

The following topics will be discussed:

- ❖ The educational options currently available for blind and visually impaired students in the public education system in New York City. Best practices nationwide, and whether more and better options are needed across New York State.
- ❖ The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a consortium currently made up of eighteen states including New York that received a \$186 million federal grant through the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top Assessment Program competition, with which it has promised to develop "next-generation" academic assessments for use in measuring the academic progress and achievement of K-12 students. These assessments are electronic. They are being field tested this spring and will be implemented in the fall. We are concerned that blind students are being excluded from the field test and that accessibility issues are not being tested or addressed. The field test assessments will not be offered in Braille, nor will they be available for use with text-to-speech screen reading technology that is commonly used by blind students. Dr. Marc Maurer, President of the National Federation of the Blind, said: "While PARCC has promised that its assessment tests will ultimately be accessible, the lack of accessibility during field testing will put blind students at a significant disadvantage, because accessibility issues that may arise will not be identified until PARCC's assessments are being deployed throughout the states in the consortium. Furthermore, the failure to make these assessments accessible during all phases of deployment violates federal law, especially since PARCC has received hundreds of millions of dollars in federal money to develop the tests. Blind Americans, and the parents of blind children, cannot and will not

tolerate blind students being forced to wait for likely inferior accessibility to the tests that will measure their academic performance, simply because the students happen to live in states that are part of a consortium that does not take its stated commitment to accessibility seriously.”

- ❖ Written in 1938, Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act discriminates against people with disabilities. The provision allows the Secretary of Labor to grant to employers Special Wage Certificates that permit them to pay workers with disabilities subminimum wages (wages that are less than the federal minimum wage) primarily in sheltered workshops (segregated work environments). This is based on the false assumption that disabled workers are less productive than nondisabled workers, which has been disproven by the successful employment models that have emerged in the last seventy-five years to assist people with significant disabilities in acquiring the job skills needed for competitive work. Section 14(c) sustains segregated subminimum-wage workshops that exploit disabled workers, paying some only pennies per hour for mundane, repetitive tasks. This practice is unfair and immoral and this provision needs to be abolished.
- ❖ The Braille Authority of North America (BANA) has voted to implement Unified English Braille (UEB) in January of 2016. We are concerned that current and future TVIs are not being prepared in order to teach this new Braille system when it is rolled out.

List of Invitees:

Bill de Blasio, Mayor of the City of New York  
Cathy Nolan, Education Committee Chair, State Assembly  
Gayle Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Melissa Mark-Viverito, Speaker, New York City Council  
Latisha James, Public Advocate of the City of New York

Carmen Farina, Chancellor, NYC DOE  
Corinne Rello-Anselmi, Deputy Chancellor, NYC DOE  
Gary Hecht, Superintendent of District 75, NYC DOE  
Helen Kaufman, Administrative Assistant, Assistant Superintendent, District 75  
Educational Vision Services Supervisors

Representatives from: Commission for the Blind, New York State Commission for the Blind Executive Board, Visions, Guildnet/Lighthouse

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### **About the Parents of Blind Children of New York**

The POBCNY is a parent advocacy group working to improve the lives of blind children within the state of New York. It is our mission to elevate the quality of education for blind children, to affect our children's access to services, to create opportunities in theatre and the arts, in sports and recreation and to raise the level of expectation that those around us have of our children. To that end we have been conducting seminars and conferences in New York State for many years. Through that outreach process we have begun to share our vision for the future of blind children with families facing similar challenges. The children we serve come from all socio-economic backgrounds, races and age groups. They vary in their degree of visual impairment and many have additional disabilities. We believe in our children and in their future and are working to provide them the necessary skills to achieve true success and independence in adulthood. Further we feel strongly that the influence of successful blind role models is critical to our children's development.