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December 13, 2018

Hon. Thomas P. DiNapoli
New York State Comptroller
110 State Street, 15th Floor
Albany, NY 12236

Dear Comptroller DiNapoli:

The following is the New York State Education Department's (Department) response to the final audit Report 2017-S-52: Oversight of Chronic Absenteeism. The Department would like to make you aware of the following actions related to the Comptroller's recommendations since the report was provided in September 2018:

Recommendation 1

Take steps to ensure that students' school attendance data in the Department's system accurately reflects the data reported by school districts and LEAs.

Response: As noted in the Department's response appended to the audit report, the data in the Department's data warehouse accurately reflects the data submitted by Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The issues noted are a combination of concerns outlined in recommendations 2 and 3 - LEAs must adopt data quality procedures to ensure the data in their local systems are accurately submitted to the Department using the Department required attendance codes (recommendation 2) and that the data in Department's data warehouse are complete and accurate prior to the reporting and certification deadlines (recommendation 3).

In October 2018, Department staff reviewed the results of the audit and these requirements with Regional Information Center (RIC) staff, since they work directly with LEAs on issues related to data reporting. The RIC staff agreed to address these concerns with the LEAs to improve the accuracy of data reporting. The Department will follow up with the RICs in January.

Recommendation 2

Provide clear guidance to school districts on how to set up local attendance codes that will translate the correct data to the Department's attendance system.

Response: The Department has drafted a guidance memo to LEAs that will be distributed in December 2018 regarding correctly "translating" local attendance codes to state attendance codes used for attendance data collection in Student Information Repository

System (SIRS) and plans outreach to a sample of LEAs to review these requirements and data reporting in the 2018-19 school year.

Recommendation 3

Work with school districts to develop guidance for certifying chronic absenteeism data.

Response: Included in the December guidance memo to be distributed to LEAs will be instruction on verifying and certifying absenteeism data.

Recommendation 4

Ensure communications to school districts and LEAs contain sufficient detail outlining expected actions to address chronic absenteeism.

Response: The Department has researched other State's initiatives and emerging research regarding best practices on effective strategies to address chronic absenteeism and will distribute the best practices guidance memo to the field in early 2019.

Recommendation 5

Monitor school districts' and LEA efforts to address chronic absenteeism; identify and share best practices.

Response: In addition to the best practices guidance memo to be distributed in early 2019, the Department will visit a sample of LEAs to review local efforts to address chronic absenteeism and share best practices.

Yours truly,



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