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March 14, 2013

John King
Commissioner
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12234

Dear Commissioner King:

I am writing to follow up on my call from yesterday. As I explained to Nicolas Storelli-Castro from your office, I take seriously the concerns I have heard from constituents who were very disturbed to read in a Reuters article earlier this month that the New York State Education Department (NYSED) plans to share confidential student data with the non-profit corporation inBloom Inc., with which NYSED contracted to provide a K-12 student database. The alarming article notes that for-profit tech companies and other commercial vendors could have access to this data, and that the company "cannot guarantee the security of the information stored."

Mr. Storelli-Castro explained that many New York State school districts already contract and share student data with outside vendors and one goal of NYSED's contract with inBloom is to obviate the need for more costly district-by-district contracts. While I recognize the potential benefits of integrating technological advances into all facets of education, I strongly believe that our State must not proceed with any initiatives, however well-intentioned, that could compromise the privacy of our public school students and their families.

In light of these concerns, I respectfully urge NYSED to:

- Notify all parents of the impending data disclosures to inBloom; explain the ways in which the data will be used and any ways the data might be shared by inBloom with third parties.
- Provide parents with an opportunity to make an informed decision to opt-out of sharing their children's identifying information.



- Invite comments from parents and privacy experts about privacy, security and safety concerns related to data sharing with outside vendors.
- Explain how families can obtain relief if their children are harmed by the improper use or accidental release of their information by inBloom, Inc., including who will be held financially responsible.
- Pledge that the privacy rights of public school children and their families will be respected over the interests of the Gates Foundation, inBloom Inc., News Corporation, or any other company or organization with whom this information may be shared.

Furthermore, any student data shared by NYSED or local school districts with an outside organization should be stripped of the students' names, addresses and social security numbers and instead use unique identifiers known only by individual students' parents, schools and districts.

Thank you for your dedication to New York's schoolchildren. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brad Hoylman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Brad Hoylman
New York State Senator
27th District