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Chancellor Carmen Farina
Department of Education
Tweed Courthouse
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

February 7, 2018

Dear Chancellor Farina,

The Department of Education recently issued gender-neutral guidelines, which, although intended to promote inclusion, have resulted in confusion and disappointment. These guidelines are not only unclear, but have resulted in longstanding events such as father-daughter dances being eliminated. There is no reason to do away entirely with events that have filled children's lives with joy for years simply to achieve a political agenda. These types of activities promote family relationships and bonding, and stepfathers, brothers, cousins, and grandparents have stepped in for years for those little girls without fathers. In the same vein, transgender students can be accommodated by being allowed to participate in the activity that's being held for the gender with which they identify.

The real impact of your ruling was exemplified at PS 65 on Staten Island when hundreds of girls had their father-daughter dance cancelled. Despite the fact that the prevailing sentiment among parents and students at PS 65 was to continue the tradition of the dance, the PTA was still forced to postpone the event until further notice. Other activities for various gender combinations of parent and child are now in jeopardy of prohibition for being deemed too exclusive for a public school.

I agree that school events should be inclusive and welcoming, but this goal can be accomplished without a ban on every semblance of tradition. Rather than robbing every student of the opportunity to create a lifelong memory, the school system should instead focus on establishing accommodations should a transgender student wish to attend a function. The origins of a dance may lie in the celebration of the father-daughter relationship, but that is not to say that it forces anyone to conform to those roles. Dances like this exist as a symbol of togetherness and familial appreciation, and those ideals are not limited to any "gender-based practice."

I ask that this policy please be reconsidered so that students can continue to partake in the same activities they have enjoyed for decades and so that every American family does not feel that their culture and traditions are under attack by an unnecessary government intrusion. These guidelines have created intense divides and sadness, and need to be rethought to serve the purpose for which they were intended. Our education system should be informed by what is best for the wellbeing of our children, not just the current ideology of an administration.

If I can be of assistance in further addressing this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Malliotakis", written in a cursive style.

Nicole Malliotakis