



**Acting Commissioner Christopher D. Cerf's statement on Secretary Arne Duncan's announcement of NCLB waivers**

**For Immediate Release**

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"We applaud Secretary Duncan for his challenge to develop next generation accountability systems at the state level. Accountability systems do not exist for their own sake but as part of an overall strategy to advance student learning and ensure that children graduate from high school ready for college and career. NCLB has played a critical role in advancing that goal by shining a light on student achievement -- both in the aggregate and by socio-economic status and other subgroups -- and by reinforcing that schools' and districts' failure to advance student learning must have real consequences. However, as the Secretary acknowledges, the law suffers from some basic flaws, including its failure to give credit for progress (as opposed to absolute performance), its one-size-fits-all approach to labeling schools as "failing," and the perverse incentive it has created for some states to water down academic standards.

We agree with the Secretary that we can and must do better at both the state and federal level. In that spirit, here in New Jersey we have been examining ways to strengthen our accountability system with the goal of measuring schools more fairly, continuing to raise academic standards, creating meaningful data to help our struggling schools improve, and developing appropriate interventions in the case of persistent educational failure. While we await further clarification of the criteria from the Secretary, we are actively considering a waiver on the basis of these refinements."