



# PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**NYSUT defends tenure as a fundamental safeguard for students and teachers**

**ALBANY, N.Y.** June 26, 2014 — *New York State United Teachers President Karen E. Magee today issued the following statement regarding the pending legal challenge to the state’s tenure law by a group calling itself the Partnership for Educational Justice:*

“NYSUT will fiercely defend tenure as a fundamental safeguard for teachers, for our students and for quality public schools.

“Despite its more than 100-year existence, tenure remains wildly misunderstood. Unions do not negotiate tenure. It has been part of New York state law for many decades before teacher unions were recognized in New York. It also does not ensure ‘a job for life.’ Earning tenure in New York simply means that, if a teacher is accused of incompetence or wrongdoing, she is entitled to a fair hearing before she can be fired. In the United States, we call that due process of law.

“Well-off schools with the highest student test scores come under the same tenure law as struggling schools in high-poverty areas. Tenure is not a cause of low student achievement.

“Former television celebrity Campbell Brown has got it all wrong. While tenure is a necessary safeguard for a teacher wrongly accused of misconduct or incompetence, it also protects children’s right to a good education. Because tenure exists, teachers in New York state can — and do — challenge the state’s obsession with over-testing and how it hurts our students. Because tenure exists, teachers in New York state can — and do — stand up for decent class sizes, for art and music, and for the books and technology all students need. Because of tenure, a teacher can stand up for his students in special education, for English language learners and for students who live in poverty. It means a teacher can’t be arbitrarily fired for challenging the status quo.

“While they may bill themselves as ‘reformers,’ the wealthy elite don’t want to address the real reason why some students in some of our schools are struggling — and that’s poverty.

“If hedge fund millionaires and celebrity dilettantes were truly interested in guaranteeing students a quality education, they would join parents and unions in fighting for fair funding for *all* children, not just the affluent. All our students deserve the quality education that hedge fund millionaires ensure for children of privilege. But, time and again, the wealthy elite are AWOL because they don’t want to pay their fair share in taxes for what kids *really* need. Their obscene profit-motivated attacks on the rights of

working people are why America no longer has the largest middle class in the world. Fundamental rights for workers are essential to a decent standard of living in New York state. And fundamental rights for teachers are essential to fairness and defending what students need.

“NYSUT will mount an aggressive and vigorous challenge to any attempt to strip New York’s teachers of this essential and fundamental right.”

*New York State United Teachers is a statewide union with more than 600,000 members in education, human services and health care. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.*