



Dear Governor Cuomo:

I am writing to respectfully request that you withdraw the proposal in the Executive Budget to change the funding for 4201 state supported schools for the deaf. Your proposal as it stands now would undermine the 4201 schools and devastate the future success of many deaf and hard of hearing children. This proposal would also dismantle some of the longest standing schools for the deaf in the Country including the New York School for the Deaf (also known as "Fanwood").

My own success in Hollywood would not have been possible without a fundamental education provided by skilled teachers of the deaf. I received my education in a program with many other deaf and hard of hearing students. This program gave me the tutelage and confidence to achieve my goals.

Given the unique needs of deaf and hard of hearing students, a range of programming options must be offered including those that offer intensive language access through state supported schools for the deaf. I am concerned that children who are deaf or hard of hearing will be left behind because your proposal, if passed, will eliminate programs that provide the intensive language access that many deaf and hard of hearing students require. Your proposal does not merely cut benefits; it eliminates access to an appropriate education for many deaf and hard of hearing children.

While inclusion may be appropriate for many children who are deaf or hard of hearing or have other disabilities, the elimination of state funded schools for the deaf will deprive many children the access to a program that meets their educational needs.

Do not deprive your state of future actors/actresses, lawyers, doctors, teachers, and other productive citizens who happen to be deaf or hard of hearing. This issue is so important to me that I will bring attention to it in whatever way possible.

Please do the right thing and retain the 4201 schools so that the deaf and hard of hearing children of New York can have a chance at productive lives.

Sincerely,

Marlee Matlin
Academy Award-Winning Actress
NAD Celebrity Spokesperson