

Dear SEM Parents,

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has issued [new regulations for independent and religious schools](#). In the name of “substantial equivalency for nonpublic schools,” public school districts all over the state will be given direct oversight of schools such as SEM. In our case, we would be regulated by the Buffalo Board of Education and its superintendent.

NYSED has established a public comment period regarding the new regulations. The New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS) has asked that its member schools participate in a letter writing campaign to defeat the proposed regulations. With your help now we can deliver a strong response that will compel NYSED to revise the regulations to allow SEM to fulfill our mission to your daughters.

Please email or write the Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Education Christina Coughlin, the Erie County Regent Catherine Collins, and NYSAIS. All comments should be submitted in the next two weeks. A sample letter for you to mail or email can be found at the bottom of this email.

Since 1851, we have fostered a culture of scholarship, leadership, creativity, and athletics specifically for girls. Oversight by the already overburdened Buffalo Board of Education would prevent us from fulfilling our mission and hamper our ability to provide the level of inquiry and learning that distinguishes us. It is also redundant. We are already accredited by NYSAIS.

We believe in education for all, and a good education for all. I also believe in school choice and in students and families being able to find their best fit. With all of our voices heard, we hope our collective influence ultimately leads New York State Commissioner MaryEllen Elia to retract these regulations and to find a better way to improve education for all children.

This letter, NYSAIS talking points, and copy of the proposed regulations can be found on the [MySEM portal page](#). If you have any questions, please call or email us: hmarlette@buffaloseminary.org or pjlong@buffalo.edu.

Sincerely,

Helen L. Marlette
Head of School

Patrick J. Long
Chair, SEM Board of Trustees

To write by email, CUT & PASTE this block of email addresses into the TO field: seregcomments@nysed.gov, Regent.Collins@nysed.gov, regulations@NYSAIS.org

**Use this MEMO line:
NO to Substantial Equivalency Regulations**

To write paper mail, use these addresses:

Christina Coughlin
NY Education Department
SORIS
89 Washington Avenue,
Room 1075 EBA
Albany, NY 12234

Regent Catherine Collins
508 Main Street
Buffalo, NY, 14202

Regulations at NYSAIS
NYSAIS
17 Elk Street, 1st Floor
Albany, NY 12207

CUT & PASTE the following text into an email or paper document and sign by typing your name, the name of our school, and your town.

Dear Ms. Coughlin and the Honorable Regent Collins,

I support improving education at all schools in New York State. But, I do not support the

Commissioner's proposed "substantial equivalency" regulations.

My daughter(s) attend Buffalo Seminary, an independent all-girls school that is a member of the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS). Our school regularly undergoes a thorough review by NYSAIS, which includes an evaluation of the curriculum to establish students are receiving instruction that meets the state's requirements for substantial equivalency. Our school not only meets those standards, it exceeds them.

We chose to send our daughter to Buffalo Seminary for many reasons, not the least of which is that we believe the school's mission and policies meet our family's needs. To require the Buffalo Board of Education to oversee SEM is unacceptable.

The mission of SEM allows our daughter to thrive at school and is consistent with our goals for her education. The proposed process would be redundant and could be costly in both time and money. There is no need for our school and other NYSAIS accredited schools to be re-reviewed.

I propose schools accredited by NYSAIS be excused from the review process and the local public school district administration and board of education not have direct oversight of our school.

Sincerely,

Your name

Your school

Your town