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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NYSUT: Public schools not a monopoly but a centerpiece of democracy

ALBANY, N.Y. October 28, 2014 – New York State United Teachers responded today to comments by Gov. Andrew Cuomo to the *Daily News* editorial board.

“Public education is for the public good,” said NYSUT President Karen E. Magee. “It is not a monopoly. It is the centerpiece of our democracy and what makes our nation great. Reclaiming the promise of public education should be our singular focus. The governor’s comments are an unfortunate distraction from the serious conversation we must have in this state about addressing poverty, funding and real solutions that ensure that every child receives fair and equal access to high quality education.”

Magee noted public education is succeeding — in the vast majority of school districts and for the vast majority of students. “In those places where students and schools are struggling, the solution lies in addressing the root causes — the cycle of grinding poverty, inequity and chronic underfunding that are undermining the heroic work of teachers and other educators,” Magee said.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta said NYSUT members believe the state’s teacher evaluation and standardized testing systems are seriously flawed and must be remedied.

“Teachers have always been evaluated and will continue to be evaluated,” he said. “But, evaluations must be fair. They should promote professional growth and improvement, not be a ‘gotcha’ system. Fixing the teacher evaluation system will be a priority for NYSUT in this upcoming legislative session. New York state must listen more to students, parents and teachers — and less to billionaire hedge fund managers — and reduce the reliance on standardized testing and data. There must be a greater emphasis on all that happens in the classroom to promote learning. Students are more than a test score, and the state’s policies must reflect that.”

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.