



**Buffalo♦New York City♦Rochester♦Syracuse♦Yonkers♦Mount Vernon♦Utica**

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## **2018-2019 STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES**

- 1. A minimum increase of \$1.2 billion in funding over the Executive Budget is needed.**  
The Conference of Big 5 School Districts and the other members of the Educational Conference Board have put forth a proposal calling for a year-to-year school aid increase of \$2 billion.

These additional resources are critical as all of the Big 5 member school districts are heavily reliant on State funds. The large city school districts have no ability to raise local revenue given their fiscal dependency and Mount Vernon and Utica are limited by the tax cap imposed upon independent school districts.
- 2. The Foundation Aid phase-in must be accelerated and flexibility maintained.**  
The State must provide school districts with an expedited Foundation Aid phase-in and commit to a funding formula that is transparent and affords school districts predictability. Students in the Big 5 member school districts should not have to wait for equitable educational opportunities.

School districts should also be granted maximum flexibility for community schools set-aside amounts under Foundation Aid.
- 3. The Executive Budget's school-based budget reporting mandate must be rejected.**  
The Executive Budget's proposal to link school aid increases to State Education Department and Division of Budget approval of detailed school-based budget statements must be rejected. This measure would apply to the Big 5 dependent school districts starting in 2018-2019. An additional ten school districts, including Utica, would be impacted beginning in 2019-2020. A mandate to report school-based expenditures already exists for all public schools under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act for federal, State and local dollars.

Furthermore, our school districts are already subject to numerous other financial accountability measures including Contract for Excellence expenditure requirements, set-asides under Foundation Aid and State and federal program and fiscal audits.
- 4. The Executive Budget's proposed cap on expense-based aids must be rejected.**  
The Executive Budget's proposal to cap growth in expense-based aids including Transportation and Building Aids is especially problematic. Our school districts are engaged in major capital construction initiatives to modernize, renovate and expand their infrastructure and capping Building Aid would seriously jeopardize efforts to advance projects essential to their educational mission.

Furthermore, this proposal may force school districts to divert resources from the classroom in order to cover increases in debt service payments and transportation expenses.

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5. **Additional funding is necessary for English Language Learners (ELLs).**

The State must provide more support for ELL students through a designated categorical program and an expansion of the weighting for ELL pupils under Foundation Aid.

The Conference's seven districts educate 45% of New York State's K-12 public school students including 69% of the ELL student population. Furthermore, the majority of pupils who are newly arrived to the United States, including many refugee students, are educated in our districts.

6. **Special Services Aid and Career and Technical Education funds must be expanded.**

The \$3,900 per pupil formula-based funding cap under Special Services Aid must be increased and reimbursement should be adjusted to capture 9th grade students. In addition, additional resources should be provided to enable Mount Vernon and Utica to expand in-district Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

The New York State Board of Regents adopted Multiple Pathways to High School Graduation with the goal of expanding the delivery of CTE and improving graduation rates. The Big 5 member school districts are interested in building upon some of their extraordinarily successful CTE programs.

7. **School Health Services funding must be restored, expanded and increased.**

The Executive Budget cuts school health funding by \$1.2 million for the Buffalo and Rochester school districts. These cuts must be restored and increases provided for all school districts receiving School Health Services funds (Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers). In addition, funding must be expanded to include New York City, Mount Vernon and Utica.

School Health Services funding has not kept pace with student health and medical needs and the growing programmatic requirements imposed on school health personnel.

8. **Charter school expansion must be limited and the funding system altered.**

Charter school expansion in saturated school districts must be limited and enhanced accountability measures applied to charter schools to ensure that enrollment accurately reflects district pupil demographics.

In addition, supplemental charter school tuition payments must be increased to protect school districts from scheduled tuition increases and accelerated in order to enable school districts to receive current year reimbursement. The Executive proposal to end reimbursement for New York City must be rejected. Lastly, Charter School Transitional Aid must be expanded to capture conversion and district-sponsored charter schools and extended beyond three years for all schools.

9. **Summer School for Special Education reimbursement must be protected.**

The Executive Budget's proposal to alter the Summer School for Special Education reimbursement formula must be rejected.

While the proposed revision would benefit some school districts, others would experience significant cuts.

10. **Additional targeted funding is needed for ongoing professional development.**

Additional resources are necessary for teacher and principal training and professional development initiatives for the Big 5 non-component school districts.

There is currently no targeted funding for these vital programs, which are essential to improving instructional quality and student outcomes as our districts move forward with implementation of the Board of Regents' recently adopted Next Generation Learning Standards.