



Buffalo ♦ New York City ♦ Rochester ♦ Syracuse ♦ Yonkers ♦ Utica

2017-2018 STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES*

- 1. A minimum increase of \$1.04 billion in education funding over the Executive Budget proposal is needed and unilateral decisions about mid-year funding reductions must be rejected.**

The Conference of Big 5 School Districts and the other members of the Educational Conference Board put forth a proposal calling for an increase of over \$2 billion in school aid next year, which is in line with the New York State Board of Regents State Aid proposal.

The Executive should not be permitted to make mid-year reductions in education funding without legislative approval.

- 2. Foundation Aid must be maintained and fully funded with increases aligned to the specific needs of school districts including pupil demographics, enrollment growth and local fiscal capacity. In addition, maximum flexibility should be provided under the community schools set-aside including permitting the use of funds to maintain current programs.**

The six member school districts of the Conference are each faced with a multitude of unique circumstances that must be reflected in the Foundation Aid formula in order to ensure that each and every child is afforded the opportunity to succeed and to graduate college and career ready. The State must commit to providing school districts with a predictable and transparent funding system with poverty measures that accurately reflect the populations being served. Schools should also be provided with maximum flexibility for community schools set-aside amounts under Foundation Aid.

- 3. Additional funding is necessary for English Language Learners.**

The Conference's six districts educate 45% of New York State's 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. Additional funding for more bilingual teachers, translators and support services is required. Options for additional funding include a separate designated categorical program and an expansion of the number of ELL pupils captured in Foundation Aid.

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4. Special Services Aid for Career and Technical Education must be increased and expanded.

The New York State Board of Regents adopted Multiple Pathways to High School Graduation with the goal of expanding the delivery of career and technical education (CTE) and improving graduation rates. The Conference is requesting two specific changes to funding levels to expand CTE programs in the Big 5 districts.

- Increase the Special Services Aid per pupil formula-based funding cap from \$3,900 to \$4,200
- Expand Special Services Aid reimbursement to capture 9th grade students in keeping with the start of our Districts' CTE programs

5. Receivership schools need a more reasonable timeline and a commitment by the State to provide additional funding.

The Conference supports the Educational Conference Board's request to revise the timeline under the Receivership statute to provide schools a minimum of five years prior to appointment of an external receiver. In addition, additional and sustained funding for both persistently struggling and struggling schools is critical and previously appropriated funds must be released to schools immediately. These funds are essential to support efforts to transform schools.

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

The Executive Budget cuts school nurse funding for the Buffalo and Rochester school districts. Furthermore, school health funding for our school districts has not kept pace with student health and medical needs and the growing programmatic requirements imposed on school health personnel. The Conference requests:

- An additional \$2 million in funding, above the Executive Budget proposal, for the Buffalo and Rochester City School Districts (this includes restoration of the \$1.2 million cut proposed for each District in the Executive Budget)
- An increase of \$1.2 million in funding for the Syracuse and Yonkers School Districts
- An extension of the program to include funding for the New York City and Utica City School Districts

7. School districts must be protected from increases and permitted to decrease charter school payments pursuant to statutory formula, if the tuition is unfrozen next year. In addition, stronger accountability measures must be applied to Charter Schools and current Transitional Aid must be expanded to capture conversion and district-sponsored schools.

School districts cannot afford to shoulder the burden of increased charter school payments. The Conference recognizes charter schools as a public school parental choice option and calls for enhanced accountability measures to ensure that charter school enrollment adequately reflects district pupil demographics including ELLs, special education pupils and children living in poverty. The Conference also requests the continuation and expansion in Charter School Transitional Aid to capture conversion and district-sponsored schools and to extend beyond three years for all schools.

8. Additional targeted funding is needed for ongoing professional development which is vital to improving instructional quality and student outcomes.

We request additional resources for teacher and principal training and professional development initiatives for the Big 5 school districts, which currently receive no targeted funding for these vital programs.