



## **Advocates ask for federal intervention on school funding**

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The Campaign for Fiscal Equity and the Alliance for Quality Education have asked Arne Duncan, the United States secretary of education, to intervene in New York's budget process because the state doesn't plan to use federal stimulus money to increase foundation aid to school districts. The federal statute requires that the funds be distributed through the state's primary education formulas, the groups said, and the proposed budget "appears to be in violation."

"We are asking you to intervene immediately to ensure that the budget scheduled for a vote tomorrow not be allowed to supersede or circumvent federal intent and requirements to fund 'equity and adequacy' in the distribution of (stimulus) funds to school districts," said the letter, signed by Billy Easton, head of the Alliance for Quality Education, and Geri Palast, executive director of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

The \$131.8 billion budget, which will be voted on by lawmakers this week, would delay a schedule for increasing school aid by \$7 billion. The four-year plan, which was adopted in 2007, would be implemented over seven years instead of four. Lawmakers and the governor added the money to resolve a longstanding lawsuit over education equity in New York City. New York reworked the formula for school foundation aid, the largest state education grant, to target needy school districts around the state. In the last two years, 37.5 percent of the total foundation aid increase was distributed to districts.

The Campaign for Fiscal Equity and Alliance for Quality Education want a larger portion of the state's stimulus funds on foundation aid in 2009-10, and they are asking that the deferral of the phase-in not be allowed. They want at least one year of the foundation formula phase-in to be funded over the next two years.