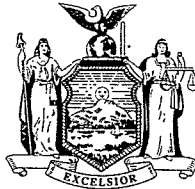


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HIGHER EDUCATION
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RULES



SENATOR
KEVIN S. PARKER
21ST SENATORIAL DISTRICT
STATE OF NEW YORK

ALBANY OFFICE:
ROOM 604
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
PHONE: 518-455-2580
FAX: 518-426-6843

DISTRICT OFFICE:
1300 FLATBUSH AVENUE
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11210
PHONE 718-629-6401
FAX 718-629-6420

e-mail:
parker@nysenate.gov

January 12, 2015

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We write to express our urgent concerns about the state of primary and secondary education in New York. We are not fulfilling the Campaign for Fiscal Equity commitment for school districts throughout New York State. In fact, data from the State Education Department shows we are \$4.9 billion behind on our CFE commitment, which does not take into consideration the \$1.1 billion Gap Elimination Adjustment that was developed to deal with the 2008 financial crisis. According to groups like The Alliance for Quality Education (AQE), fifty four percent of school districts currently receive less state aid than they did in 2008-09 (sixty nine percent excluding building aid).

We are grateful for the funding increases included in recent years' budgets, but they have not kept up with rising costs. As a recent New York Times editorial points out, true commitment to improving education in New York "means confronting and proposing remedies for the racial and economic segregation that has gripped the state's schools, as well as the inequality in school funding that prevents many poor districts from lifting their children up to state standards" (New York Times, January 4th, 2015). We know you understand the need for our Empire State to invest adequately in our children's future, and how important it is to improve schools and reduce the inequality that exists across this state, in rural communities, suburban areas, and cities large and small.

In the past six years, schools across New York State have been forced to make classroom cuts. Class sizes have soared, leaving students in overcrowded classrooms—sometimes in excess of 30 students in elementary classrooms. The quality of the curriculum has diminished, with cuts to art, music, advanced placement courses, foreign languages, career and technical education, and more. Tutoring to help students who have fallen behind and summer school have both been reduced. Student supports in the form of guidance counselors, social workers, and librarians

have all been cut back. If we continue to disinvest in our children and their schools, we will be sacrificing the economic future of our state and the well-being of our children and families.

There is an alternative. You have worked with us to create small pilot programs which provide students access to community schools, extended learning time, college preparatory curriculums, and teacher mentoring programs. All of these approaches have a proven track record of success, but in order to take them to scale for large numbers of students we need to move from pilot programs to large scale investment. Your leadership last year on pre-K raised the hopes of New Yorkers across the state. The investment of \$300 million for New York City serves 53,000 four year olds with full-day pre-K. The investment of \$40 million for the rest of the state serves 4% of four year olds in upstate and suburban communities. The next step in fulfilling our joint commitment to universal full-day pre-K is a substantial expansion of pre-K outside New York City and we must eliminate barriers to participation by providing upfront, instead of reimbursable, funding. Another pressing need is the growing numbers of English language learners in our schools across the state including the recent influx of unaccompanied minors. The state must increase its commitment to these students.

The New York State Board of Regents recently approved new options for students to meet the State's high school graduation requirements. The new regulations establish multiple, comparably rigorous pathways to graduation, including pathways in Career and Technical Education (CTE); Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); the Arts; Biliteracy (languages other than English); and the Humanities. CTE, the Arts, and other comparable programs motivate students to stay in school and help provide the skills necessary to succeed in postsecondary education and a variety of demanding, high-skill career paths. The Regents also recognized that appropriate funds have to be available to support new student enrollments in these programs; that is why their budget proposal includes a request for approximately \$2 billion in additional funding. We are especially supportive of the request for enhanced Special Services Aid and BOCES Aid for CTE programs, which will provide greater opportunity for CTE education for all students across the entire state, regardless of what kind of district they live in.

New York State has one of the largest gaps in funding between wealthy and poor school districts in the entire nation. According to a national report by the Education Law Center, New York State ranks seventh from the bottom on equity of school funding. In fact, research by AQE shows that the funding gap between the 100 wealthiest and 100 poorest school districts is now \$8,733 per student, an all-time high. The Campaign for Fiscal Equity sought to remedy this situation and create educational equity throughout the state. The unfulfilled promise of CFE has resulted in another lawsuit brought by parents and students from small cities across the state which proceeds to trial this month. School funding must serve all districts, but it must prioritize high needs schools. We must make progress on reducing the Gap Elimination Adjustment, but we must also invest in foundation aid to ensure we are prioritizing high needs students.

As you prepare your budget proposal, we respectfully request that you include a substantial increase in education funding. Our schools need \$2.2 billion in additional aid, including the Regents recommendation for \$250 million for pre-K, distributed through an equitable formula, to overcome the cuts of prior years and prepare our students for the global economy. Like you, we


support educational accountability, and we want to make sure that our schools have the resources they need to meet their goals.


We look forward to collaborating with you on the 2015-16 state budget, and to working together to ensure that the best interests of New York's students are fully met.

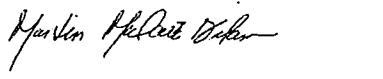
Yours in Partnership,

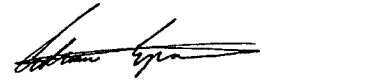

Senator KEVIN PARKER



Senator Tony Avella

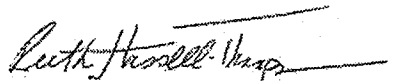

Senator Neil D. Breslin



Senator Leroy Comrie

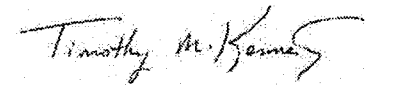

Senator Martin Malavé Dilan



Senator Adriano Espaillat



Senator Jesse Hamilton

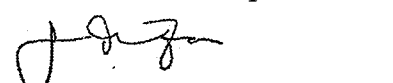

Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson


Senator Brad Hoylman

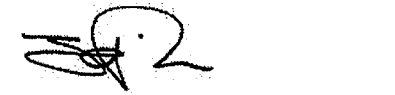

Senator Timothy M. Kennedy

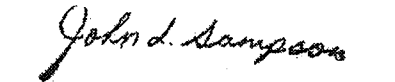

Senator Velmanette Montgomery

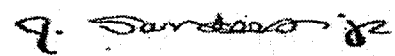

Senator Marc Panepinto



Senator Jose Peralta


Senator Bill Perkins


Senator Gustavo Rivera


Senator John L. Sampson


Senator James Sanders Jr.


Senator José M. Serrano


Senator Toby Ann Stavisky



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Executive Chamber, Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

January 20th, 2015

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We write to express our urgent concerns about the state of primary and secondary education in New York. We are not fulfilling the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) commitment to school districts throughout New York State. In fact, data from the New York State Education Department suggests that we are approximately \$4.9 billion behind on our CFE commitment. We know you understand the need for our Empire State to invest adequately in our children's future, and how important it is to improve schools and reduce the inequality that exists across this state - in rural communities, suburban areas, and cities large and small. The growing inequality gap in our schools is a matter of civil and constitutional rights of the gravest proportions.

Although we are pleased that recent budgets have included funding increases, they have not kept up with rising needs. In the past six years, schools across New York State have been forced to make classroom cuts. Class sizes have soared, leaving students in overcrowded classrooms - sometimes in excess of 30 students in elementary classrooms. The quality of the curriculum has diminished, with cuts to art, music, advanced placement courses, foreign languages, career and technical education, and more. Tutoring to help students who have fallen behind and summer school have both been reduced. Student supports in the form of guidance counselors, social workers, and librarians have all been cut back. If we continue to disinvest in our children and their schools, we will be sacrificing the economic future of our state and the well-being of our children and families. As a recent New York Times editorial points out, true commitment to improving education in New York "means confronting and proposing remedies for the racial and economic segregation that has gripped the state's schools, as well as the inequality in school funding that prevents many poor districts from lifting their children up to state standards."

In recent years, the state has created small pilot programs which provide students access to community schools, extended learning time, college preparatory curriculums, and teacher mentoring programs. We now need large scale investment. Last year's commitment to pre-K raised the hopes of New Yorkers across the state; the next step in fulfilling our joint commitment to universal full-day pre-K is a substantial expansion of pre-K across the entire state and the elimination of barriers to participation for both kindergarten and pre-K. The state must also

Assemblymember Michael Benedetto
Assemblymember Michael Blake
Assemblymember Edward Braunstein
Assemblymember James Brennan
Assemblymember Anthony Brindisi
Assemblymember Harry Bronson
Assemblymember Kevin Cahill
Assemblymember Barbara Clark
Assemblymember Vivian Cook
Assemblymember Marcos Crespo
Assemblymember Michael Cusick
Assemblymember Michael DenDekker
Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz
Assemblymember Patricia Fahy
Assemblymember Sandra Galef
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Assemblymember Richard Gottfried
Assemblymember Carl Heastie
Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi
Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee
Assemblymember Latoya Joyner
Assemblymember Todd Kaminsky
Assemblymember Michael Kearns
Assemblymember Ronald Kim
Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre
Assemblymember Charles Lavine
Assemblymember Joseph Lentol
Assemblymember Guillermo Linares
Assemblymember Donna Lupardo
Assemblymember William Magee
Assemblymember William Magnarelli
Assemblymember Margaret Markey
Assemblymember Shelly Mayer
Assemblymember John McDonald
Assemblymember Walter Mosley
Assemblymember Daniel O'Donnell
Assemblymember Felix Ortiz
Assemblymember Steven Otis
Assemblymember Peoples-Stokes
Assemblymember Nick Perry
Assemblymember Daniel Quart
Assemblymember Sam Roberts
Assemblymember Annette Robinson
Assemblymember Robert Rodriguez
Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal
Assemblymember Nily Rozic
Assemblymember Addie Russell
Assemblymember Sean Ryan