



## Joint Legislative Hearing on the Executive Proposal 2018-19 Testimony by the Alliance for Quality Education.

January 31, 2018

Dear Members of the Assembly Ways and Means and Education Committees and the Senate Finance and Education Committees:

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to testify before you on the budget that Governor Cuomo has proposed.

Governor Cuomo vowed to bring equity in education. He said:

*"We must address education funding inequities and dedicate more of our state school aid to poorer districts."* State of the State, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018.

But actions speak louder than words. Over the last seven years, Governor Cuomo has not backed his words with action. Consistently and systematically, he has proposed budgets with inadequate amounts of funding for Foundation Aid or proposed eliminating Foundation Aid altogether in attempt to erase the commitment the state made to schoolchildren in 2007. The 2007 commitment was a promise by the state to infuse equitable funding to enable educational opportunity for underserved students, particularly Black, Brown and low income students. This year continues on the trend of inadequate school aid increases with only \$769 million proposed. The Foundation Aid increase included in the executive budget can only be described as pitiful, at \$338 million.

As **Assembly member Phil Ramos** said last week addressing hundreds of parents, students, and teachers *"What we're fighting for is much more than just your education and for you to have an opportunity...You are at the forefront of the modern-day civil rights struggle. [R]acism has gone underground and modern-day cross burning is done with a calculator, it's done with a formula."*

The governor made a big deal in his delivery of the budget about equity. Yet, his budget includes none or only a fraction of what is necessary to have equity. An equitable budget proposal must include adequate funding fairly distributed; anything less would mean denying opportunity and justice. Black, Brown and low income students have been denied opportunity for long enough. The budget does not fund schools adequately to enable them to:

- provide culturally responsive education where students' diversity of history, culture and race is reflected in their education;
- foster a safe and supportive school climate free from harassment, bullying and discrimination;
- recruit and retain teachers from diverse backgrounds;
- provide engaging and challenging curricula, programming and services through sustainable community schools;



- provide a strong foundation for our youngest learners through high quality child care and full-day pre-K programs.

This budget proposal is not based on equity because it does not ensure that Black, Brown and low income students have the resources they have been denied that would close the opportunity gap. New York State owes schools across the state \$4.2 billion in Foundation Aid. **Seventy four percent (74%) of the Foundation Aid owed is due to school districts with 40% or more Black and Brown students.**

Currently, there is a \$7,229 gap between the districts that have 40% or more Black and Brown students and the 100 wealthiest school districts. This gap would be reduced by \$2,067 if the all the Foundation Aid owed to these students was provided. This is the kind of funding that allows schools to hire and train teachers, social workers, school counselors, and psychologists; implement community schools; expand pre-K; and, implement reforms for a more positive school climate.

### **Budget Recommendations:**

Instead, the executive proposal is silent on a phase –in timeline for the Foundation Aid due to schoolchildren since 2007. This is in stark opposition to the proposal of the New York State Board of Regents which includes **\$1.2 billion in Foundation Aid increase with a three year phase-in**. In a continuing strategy of distraction, the governor proposes a few absurd policy changes under the auspices of ensuring that state money is spent well and reaching the poorest schools first. The first of these proposals couples state aid increases for the Big Five and districts that have more than nine schools with the creation of spending plan showing the level of funding that each school gets and its approval not only by the State Education Department but also the Division of Budget. We think this is executive overreach that goes contrary to the principle of local control and the autonomy that school districts have. We urge you to reject it. The second of these policies is capping reimbursable aids at two percent. We urge you to reject this proposal as well as all of these aids, transportation, building, and BOCES aids, are integral to the operation of the schools.

There are a few positive steps in the right direction in the executive proposal. **We agree with the \$50 million increase of Community Schools funding**, but we would urge you to take that out of Foundation Aid to ensure that funding is used for implementation of full community schools instead of only implementing some aspects of the model. **We also agree with the \$15 million increase in pre-K funding and urge you to increase it further** as the state currently only covers 21% of the four-year-olds outside of New York City. While the governor promised back in 2013 that he will fund any district that is ready to implement full-day pre-K, he has certainly and unsurprisingly not supported his words with actions. At the rate he has increased pre-K funding, it will take 163 years to fully serve all the children in the state (57 years if we go off the \$15 million proposal he has). We urge you to increase funding to \$150 million to expand quality full day pre-K outside of New York City. Community Schools and Pre-K are evidence-based strategies, with hundreds of research studies illustrating the positive results full implementation provides.

Contrary to pre-K and community schools, expansion of charters and increase of funding for charter schools is not evidence-based. Research shows that charter schools, not only do not send more students to



college, but rather they increase segregation and enhance the school-to-prison pipeline. The executive budget includes \$22.6 million for New York City charter schools, in addition to the statutory increase they are going to receive, as well as an unfair penalization of New York City public schools by capping the reimbursement that city schools receive to alleviate the fiscal impact. We urge you to reject these proposals and to **decouple charter school tuition payment increase from the school aid increase that public schools were receiving.**

Our state has always prided itself of striving to meet the needs of our special education students. This executive budget proposes changes to the formula used to make payments to summer special education programs for school-age children. These changes will result in a cut of \$34 million dollars to the vast majority of school districts and it will result in students with disabilities not receiving the programming and services they need. We urge you to reject this change.

### **Revenue:**

And, lastly, on revenues, we are heartened to see the governor propose some revenue raising actions, though we believe that his budget does not go far enough to capture the windfall that big corporations and high income earners are getting from the federal government. We, along with other groups, are putting forward a package of revenue raising actions that will enable our state to protect the most vulnerable and fund the services and programming necessary.

### **Conclusion:**

The time is now for you to take on Governor Cuomo's failure to put his words into actions and address the systemic racism and economic inequality in education in order to move our state forward on the path to equity. As Martin Luther King Jr. said: ***"Justice too long delayed is justice denied."*** **New York's students have been waiting over a decade for education justice.** A generation of students have already lost out on the unfilled promise of education justice and equity. In 2007, as a result of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, the State committed to provide \$5.5 billion in Foundation Aid increases over four years. The State provided only two years of the commitment before Governors Paterson and Cuomo cut \$2.7 billion in 2010 and 2011. Governor Cuomo likes to say that he has increased education funding, but the numbers tell a different story. Year after year he has only kept up with inflation without providing for the improvements needed for equity. The state's final budget must fully fund equity in 2018 by committing to the full Foundation Aid phase-in and must protect our state's students.

# LEGISLATIVE BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR FY 2018-19

## SCHOOL AID INCREASE: \$2.17 BILLION

**FOUNDATION AID:** \$1.4 billion based on a three-year phase-in of the \$4.2 billion owed

**EXPENSE BASED AIDS:** \$300 million for reimbursement of schools for services such as transportation

**PRE-K:** \$150 million in addition to the commitments the legislature already made

**COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FUNDING:** \$50 million in new funding to expand community schools

- Renew \$150 million in existing community schools funding: \$75 million in receivership funding, and \$75 million in community schools grants

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS:** \$100 million (new funding)

**SCHOOL CLIMATE REFORM AND MY BROTHER'S KEEPER:** Add \$50 million in new funding to the Speaker Carl Heastie's My Brother's Keeper Initiative

**\$9.9 MILLION FOR ADULT LEARNING**

## CHILD CARE

Increase state investment by \$100 million to expand access to quality child care and stabilize the child care workforce – the need is urgent. Currently the state serves only about 20% of the children eligible for subsidized child care, leaving working families without the crucial support they need to keep parents earning and children learning. We support the Empire State Child Care Campaign and the Winning Beginning NY coalition's agenda to meet this urgent need. Child care and Head Start programs are vital partners with Pre-K in expanding early learning across the state.



# A VISION OF **EDUCATION JUSTICE** FOR NEW YORK

Parents and families want our children to have access to high quality academic opportunities, social and emotional supports, full access to arts, music, physical education, and after-school enrichment programs like sports and other extracurricular activities. For far too long students in Black, Brown and low income communities have been systemically underfunded and denied access to these opportunities.

**It's time to end the record inequality in education funding in New York that perpetuates a widening opportunity gap.** New York's students need New York's leaders to invest in providing high quality public schools in every community. We need our elected officials to join the resistance and protect our public schools.

**In order to enact the following demands, we must fully fund our public schools using the state's Foundation Aid formula:**



**CULTURALLY  
RESPONSIVE  
EDUCATION**



**POSITIVE SCHOOL  
CLIMATE**



**INCREASE  
TEACHER DIVERSITY**



**SUSTAINABLE  
COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS**



**SUPPORT  
CHILDCARE  
& PRE-K**



**5 YEAR MORATORIUM  
ON NEW CHARTER  
SCHOOLS**



**NEW YORK STATE  
DREAM ACT**



**ADULT  
EDUCATION**

**Take a stand to ensure that all of New York's children have the opportunity to pursue their dreams regardless of race, religion, or immigration status.**

Education justice requires adequate and equitably distributed funding for our public schools. New York State has a funding formula that was created out of the demand for equity and adequacy. It is time that the state fully funds the Foundation Aid formula and fulfills the Campaign for Fiscal Equity court ruling.

# A VISION FOR EDUCATION JUSTICE



## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION

New York State public schools should offer a variety of classes, curricula, projects, books and resources that are grounded in the rich diversity of the New York State student population. Students should be learning about the histories and cultures of African, Latino, Asian, Middle Eastern and Native heritage people in New York schools, and the intersections with gender, LGBTQIA and religious diversity. Every child should have access to anti-racism and anti-bias education.



## POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

All students deserve a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying on school property, a school bus and/or at a school function. Educators need training on a variety of topics, including how to identify bullying; and school employees' duties concerning the reporting, investigation, and documenting of alleged incidents of harassment. We support increased investment in restorative justice practices as an effective alternative to punitive responses to wrongdoing. School-based restorative justice offers a more sustainable, equitable, and respectful alternative to dealing with misbehavior, from minor infractions to violence. It can also be used as a proactive strategy to create a culture of connectivity and care where all members of the school community can thrive.



## INCREASE TEACHER DIVERSITY

When students have teachers of the same race as them, they report feeling more cared for, more interested in their schoolwork and more confident in their teachers' abilities to communicate with them. They are also more likely to graduate high school and have higher college aspirations. This is why we must actively recruit and support teachers of different races and cultural backgrounds.



## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

We want strong schools with curricula that are engaging, relevant and rigorous; support high-quality teaching and not high stakes testing; social, emotional, health and mental health services as well as wraparound supports for every child; student-centered school climate, and transformative parent and community engagement.



## SUPPORT CHILDCARE & PRE-K

New York needs to fulfill its promise to provide full-day Pre-K for all 4- and 3-year-olds across the state. Instead of decreasing child care subsidies, we should be increasing support for children and families. High quality early childhood education creates long terms benefits for children, families and community. For every \$1 invested in early learning, taxpayers save \$7-\$11 in future cost. We need to invest in our youngest New Yorkers.



## A 5 YEAR MORATORIUM ON NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS

The continuous decrease in funding for public schools in order to fund charter schools undermines the efforts of local school districts. With a five-year moratorium on new charters, we can stop hindering the success of school districts while continuing to support existing charter schools. During this time we need to collect hard data on public schools and charter schools. In five years, we will review the data and lift the moratorium if necessary, or accept that traditional public schools can and will educate our future workforce and leaders.



## A NEW YORK STATE DREAM ACT

The New York State DREAM Act would advance educational opportunities for undocumented students who attend college in New York by opening up state financial aid to them. New York State's future and economic growth are dependent on a diverse, well-educated generation of students.



## ADULT EDUCATION

In New York, there are over 3.5 million individuals who lack their high school diploma, English language proficiency, or both. Adult literacy programs assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency, and those who are parents/guardians to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children. Expanding Adult Literacy Education would allow more New Yorkers to access these opportunities.