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**AQE RELEASES REPORT:
*WILL EDUCATION FUNDING PROMISES BE BROKEN?***

**DOCUMENTS THAT PROPOSED CUTS IN PROMISED STATE SCHOOL AID
DISPROPORTIONATELY HURT POOR STUDENTS, STUDENTS OF COLOR
AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS.**

Parents and Children Deliver Valentine's Day Cards to all State Legislators
Demanding a Restoration of \$350 Million Cut in
Promised Classroom Operating Foundation Aid

(Albany, NY)— Joined by parents, children and education advocates the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE) released a report today entitled, "*Will Education Funding Promises be Broken?*" The report exposes disproportionately high cuts in promised foundation aid funding for school districts with high enrollment rates of poor children, students of color and English language learners. Advocates called on state legislators to restore the \$350 million in cuts in promised foundation aid (basic classroom operating aid) in the proposed state budget this year. Following the press conference parents and children delivered Valentine's cards stating, "Don't break our hearts – Keep the promise," to every member of the state legislature. The press conference was part of six simultaneous press events across the state.

"The state legislature must keep the promise of fairness and equity made to our children and restore the \$350 million foundation aid cut. Any funding would negatively impact our children's education. This report shows that these cuts would hurt students from poor households, children of color, and English language learners much more than other students," said Billy Easton, Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education. "These are the very students that our courts found the state was not doing enough to educate. The promise was made, it must be kept."

"The Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) litigation fought to ensure that high needs kids who have suffered decades from substandard under-resourced schooling are provided their constitutional right to a sound basic education. In 2007, the Governor and the Legislature made long overdue commitments to provide \$5.5 billion in foundation aid over 4 years distributed based on need to solve the problem. The proposed cutback of \$350 million from this year's commitment of \$1.25 billion new investment falls hardest on the neediest students—the poor, African American, Hispanic, and English Language Learners. We cannot balance the budget on their backs. We demand full funding of the foundation aid with adjustments to the formula to ensure stable and predictable annual increases to serve these needs," said Geri Palast, Executive Director of The Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

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Districts outside New York City, with 60% of their students living in poverty have 15% of all students in the state, but face 20% of the cuts, while districts with only 4% of their students living in poverty have 17% of all students in the state, but face only 6% of the cuts (page 5). Similarly districts averaging a 21% black student enrollment have 24% of all students and face 26% of the cuts, while districts with between one-half of one percent and 3.4% black student enrollment have 40% of the students in the state and face only 21% of the cuts (page 6). Likewise districts with a 18% Hispanic enrollment have 24% of the students and face 24% of the cuts, while those with less than 2% Hispanic enrollment have 26% of the students and face only 15% of the cuts (page 7). Districts where 7% of the students have limited English proficiency make up 22% of the students in the state and face 22% of the cuts, while districts with between 0% and 1.65% of students having limited English proficiency have 42% of the students in the state and face only 25% of the cuts.

New York City has high proportions of all these groups of students with 76% living in poverty (page 5), 33% black student enrollment (page 6), 39% Hispanic students (page 7) and 14% limited English proficiency (page 8). New York City has 36% of all students in the state, but faces 53% of all proposed cuts in promised foundation aid.

"The executive budget is \$4.7 million short of the committed promise for Schenectady students. Schenectady schools have a high concentration of high needs students and children of color. This money must be restored so that all our children can receive the education they were promised," said Doug Williams, a Schenectady school parent.

Foundation aid, the basic classroom operating aid, is the central state aid category that pays for school operations including teachers, textbooks and materials, education programs and the vast majority of in classroom activities. Foundation aid is a critical element of public education reform as it is tied to the Contract for Excellence and is used to finance effective education reforms such as class size reduction, middle school reform and English Language Learner programs.

This year's threatened state funding cuts have the potential to undermine the 2007 historic settlement, reached by the governor and both houses of the legislature, of a long term demand for statewide school funding reform that was spurred by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. Under last year's school reform legislation, the legislature joined the governor in committing to increase foundation aid by \$5.5 billion in four pre-scheduled installments by 2010. The specific payment schedule agreed to under that law committed the state to increase foundation aid by \$1.1 billion in 2007, \$1.25 billion in 2008 and larger amounts in each of the next two years. Under that agreement, school districts were promised a \$1.25 billion increase this year, but the proposed budget only includes \$900 million—a \$350 million shortfall.