



Assemblymember

**Ellen Jaffee**

Assembly District 97



Dear Friends,

I am proud that the [2016-17 State Budget](#) includes \$24.7 billion for education, the largest investment in New York history and in our children's success.

As a longtime advocate for zeroing out the [Gap Elimination Adjustment \(GEA\)](#), I am gratified that this year we achieved this important goal, which gives us the opportunity to focus on fully-funding Foundation Aid and finally fulfilling our obligation to high-need schools as required in the [Campaign for Fiscal Equity case](#).

I am also pleased that the [Education Tax Credit](#) proposed by the Governor and the Senate was rejected due to our strong opposition.

However, I am extremely disappointed that the budget did not fund full-day kindergarten for the 9 remaining school districts in NYS, including East Ramapo and North Rockland, with half-day programs, and that the proposal to decouple state aid increases from compliance with the new annual professional performance review (APPR) law was not included in the enacted budget.

Working together, we can support our schools, our teachers and provide all children with the resources they need, from Pre-K through college, to reach their full potential.

~Ellen~

### **Full Elimination of the (GEA)**

The state has not had a budget deficit in years, so there was no longer any justification to have any remaining "gap elimination" in place. With a full elimination of the (GEA) state aid will increase by a \$434 million.

### **Foundation Aid**

While the budget increases Foundation Aid by \$627 million, the Assembly's budget proposal was for a four-year phase in of full Foundation Aid, but both the Senate and the Governor rejected this plan. Foundation Aid is intended to improve the quality of our schools. Now we must call for the remaining \$3.9 billion to be paid over the next three years.

\$175 million of Foundation Aid in the budget is earmarked for [Community Schools](#), which provide crucial services to students and their parents, including mentoring, health care, summer programs and job training.

### **My Brother's Keeper**

The budget provides \$20 million to carry out the goals of the federal *My Brother's Keeper* initiative established by President Obama, which addresses the enduring opportunity gaps faced by minority males and to implement the NYS Board of Regents' recommendations from its [Workgroup to Improve Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color](#).

### **Early Childhood Education**

The budget provides \$807 million for continued implementation and development of the [statewide universal pre-kindergarten program](#). In addition, the enacted budget also included \$2 million for Quality Stars New York quality rating and improvement system. However, the budget fails to make a significant new investment in child care subsidies. The Assembly did include \$75 million for child care subsidies for 10,000 children, but our proposal was blocked by the Governor and Senate Majority Leader, leaving tens of thousands of children who are eligible for a child care subsidy without access to child care.

### **Full-Day Kindergarten**

As a co-sponsor of [\(A.8692\)](#), I strongly support a fully-funded, full-day kindergarten program for the 9 school districts in NYS with half-day programs. Our young learners in these districts lose the equivalent of 90 days of school. This legislation would provide school districts increased funding to transition to a full-day program and reflects the importance of early childhood education, as well as the need for programs that include additional time for play-centered learning.

### **Educator Evaluations (APPR)**

Without an agreement to decouple state aid increases from compliance with the [APPR](#) it was

proposed that local school districts, should they choose to do so, be permitted to evaluate teachers and principals, ensuring that these districts would not lose significant funds if they failed to negotiate new evaluations plans during the school year. Now, the majority of districts are at risk of losing two years of aid increases unless they have an approved APPR agreement in place by September 1. I will continue to work with educators, advocates and my colleagues to address this issue before the end of the legislative session in June.

**The [Education Budget](#) also includes:**

- \$47 million to unfreeze the reimbursement of expense-based aids
- \$3 million for Early College High School grants, which help at-risk students earn both a high school diploma and an associate’s degree
- \$1 million for Career and Technical Education (CTE), while specifying that the funding must be used to reduce barriers faced by English language learners and students with disabilities, as well as promote gender diversity in CTE programs
- Increased funding for bilingual education services
- aid restoration to educational television and radio
- \$14.3 million for Teacher Resource and Computer Training Centers
- restorations for the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE), to provide career training and job placement services
- additional funding for adult literacy education, and
- increased funding for libraries across the state

*We must modify the law regarding the [Tax Cap](#) to ensure that districts can raise the funds they need to invest in quality education for their students!*

**Strengthening Higher Education**

The 2016-17 State Budget invests in New York’s public college system, making higher education more accessible and affordable for all, including:

- no tuition increase at SUNY/CUNY schools during the coming academic year
- supports community colleges
- strengthening college opportunity programs
- restoring \$1.5 million for Small Business Development Centers; and
- increased funding for libraries across the state

**East Ramapo School District Update**

When the [legislation I sponsored](#) last year to appoint a Monitor with veto power passed the Assembly but not the Senate, I refused to give up and let the students in East Ramapo continue to suffer.

To that end, my colleagues and I had ongoing conversations with the School Board President, public school advocates, the State Education Department (SED) and in subsequent negotiations we came to an agreement that would restore educational and extra-curricular opportunities that had been eliminated. Our goal was to get this agreement into the enacted state budget, which would have been a significant step toward providing guidance, collaboration and comprehensive oversight by the Commissioner of SED, with [Monitors](#) continuing in their role reviewing the actions of the School Board, the Superintendent and assisting educators. Unfortunately, this did not happen. We are now working to include that language in a stand-alone piece of legislation. We are as committed as ever to solving the issues facing East Ramapo and to assuring that the public school students are provided a quality education. I look forward to working with everyone to achieve this goal before the end of the legislative session in June.