

TESTIMONY

Joint Legislative Hearing of the
ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

&

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

On

Executive Budget Proposals for Education

SFY 2018-2019



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THE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

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Good afternoon, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Young, Assemblymember Nolan, Senator Marcellino and your honorable colleagues.

My name is Mark Cannizzaro and I am the President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). CSA is the labor union representing 6,100 active and 10,000 retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Education Administrators and Supervisors working in New York City public schools and five charter schools. CSA is also the collective bargaining unit for 200 Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors who work in city-subsidized Early Childhood Education Centers.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the Executive Budget for State Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

School Aid & Foundation Aid – We recognize the financial hazards our State faces this year, and the challenges that a projected budget deficit now present. Nevertheless, the Executive Budget proposal for School Aid falls far short from what our schools need and what the Foundation Aid formula otherwise requires. The Executive Budget proposes a \$769 million (3%) increase in education aid, including a Foundation Aid increase of only \$338 million. That's less than half the \$1.6 billion increase that the State Board of Regents recommended, and far short of the \$2.0 billion state aid increase the Educational Conference Board has called for.

CSA believes the State must commit to fully funding the Foundation Aid formula. In 2007, you enacted the Foundation Aid formula to support all school districts across New York State, and most importantly low-wealth school districts. The time has come to fulfill Foundation Aid's promise.

New York is now \$4.2 billion behind the full phase-in of Foundation Aid. We ask your support to fund Foundation Aid fully within three years.

Community Schools —CSA supports the Executive Budget proposal of \$200 million for community schools, which is \$50 million above last year's level. The success of Community Schools – that have transformed school buildings into community hubs to deliver academic, health, mental health, nutrition and counseling services to students and their families – has been nothing short of remarkable. These are smart investments proven to improve student success and achievement.

Community Schools work. There are now 215 Community Schools in New York City, the largest Community School system in the nation. Community schools confront the problems faced by most struggling schools – problems that are largely societal issues outside the school building. Students must come to school ready to learn - and this can only happen if we recognize the limitations many schoolchildren unfortunately face every day. Addressing issues relating to poverty, homelessness, poor home environment, medical/dental issues, nutrition and many other issues, form the basis for new services provided at a Community School. We are confident that these schools will continue to show and sustain concrete results, and benefit students significantly.

School Leader Professional Development —The role and work of instructional leaders has become even more crucial in recent years as policymakers have focused on supporting student achievement and eliminating college and career readiness gaps among our youth. Great schools begin with great leaders.

To ensure that school leaders successfully manage and meet ongoing challenges as well as succeed as instructional leaders, New York State must provide our Principal and Assistant Principals with access to ongoing professional development. The research-based literature related to effective schools and student achievement has long acknowledged the critical role of Principals in providing school leadership that will shape a highly complex human organization into a cohesive and collaborative community of learners.

A number of years ago, CSA established the *Executive Leadership Institute (ELI)*¹, a not-for-profit organization designed to deliver practical, relevant and essential professional development for today's school leaders. ELI provides standards-based, results-driven leadership training to help school leaders successfully fulfill their responsibilities as instructional leaders. We need to invest in more of this kind of high-level training and support. ELI's programs give school leaders the tools they need to create true learning communities.

We are grateful for the Legislature's support of ELI in the FY 2017-2018 state budget. This \$475,000 appropriation has sustained our work to provide much needed professional development services and mentoring to school leaders working in New York City public schools. ELI works with other professional organizations to provide professional development for Long Island and Upstate school administrators too. With your help and support, ELI's programs can grow, providing standards-based, high quality and results-driven leadership training to help school administrators in New York City. We ask for your continued support of this important work.

¹ <http://www.csa-nyc.org/eli/overview/>

Conversion Charter School Supplemental Aid – CSA represents a number of unionized conversion charter schools. Our unionized conversion charter schools continue to bear “legacy” costs that date from pre-conversion. Our charter school members report that pension and health insurance costs have risen dramatically in recent years, and can now comprise 12% to 22% of the entire operating budget for each school. Financial relief is urgently needed, as these costs are not covered within the regular charter school funding process.

We support a new category of support: *Conversion Charter School Supplemental Aid*. Supplemental Aid to Conversion Charter Schools will sustain the collectively bargained benefits of union membership, chiefly retirement and health benefits. Conversion Charter School Supplemental Aid was included in the Senate’s “one-house” budget last year, and we ask your consideration again in 2017 to aid these schools’ workers.

Diversity Education Program – CSA supports the Governor’s proposal to develop a diversity program for eighth and ninth graders. It is important that school leaders have access to lesson plans, best practices and instructional materials that promote awareness and respect for diversity in our schools and in the world. Funding to implement this initiative will be necessary, as when as careful consideration for when this curriculum might be offered during the school year.

Dream Act - CSA strongly supports enactment of the “DREAM Act” to continue New York's legacy of educational support for immigrant youth who attend P-12 public schools. We support allowing immigrant students to apply for state financial aid for higher education.

School-Level Funding Plans – We are concerned with the Executive Budget proposal to require New York City and other large school districts to have school-level funding plans approved by the State Education Department and the Division of Budget in order to receive additional State Aid. CSA’s principal concern would be over the strong likelihood of this requirement resulting in additional delays in schools’ receiving their budget each year. If such a requirement is considered, we recommend that an audit of the previous year’s increase be implemented instead.

Conclusion - Our students deserve the best; we must provide them with the programs, services and supports necessary to prepare them for not only college and careers, but also for life.

New York State will be successful in educating our students only when we take the time to discuss, plan, implement and provide the necessary resources to our students. During the upcoming budget negotiations, we urge the Legislature to continue to advocate for students, teachers and school leaders as you always have.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

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