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## **Testimony of UJA-Federation of New York**

### **Joint Legislative Public Hearings**

### **2018-2019 Executive Budget Proposal Education**

**January 31, 2018**

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On behalf of UJA-Federation of New York, our network of nonprofit partners and those we serve, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the importance of maintaining and expanding support for education in New York State.

Established 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to our mission is to care for those in need. We identify and meet the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. We connect people to their communities and respond to crises in New York, Israel and around the world. We support nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services.

### **Nonpublic School Funding**

The Governor's Executive budget includes funding for programs that serve as critical sources of aid for nonpublic schools across the state. We appreciate the proposed funding included in the 2018-2019 Executive Budget and the Governor's recognition of the role over 1,600 nonpublic schools play in educating approximately 400,000 children in New York State. Most significantly, we thank the Governor for continuing the \$5 million investment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs. We are also grateful for increased funding totaling \$186 million for important programs like Mandated Service Reimbursement (MSR) and the Comprehensive Attendance Policy (CAP). Lastly, we appreciate the re-appropriation of \$25 million for security for vulnerable institutions.

### **Pre Kindergarten**

Fourteen of UJA's non-profit partners provide Pre-K programs to young children in neighborhoods across New York City. Our non-profit partners are able to provide this service partially due to funding that the state contributes to support New York City's Pre-K for All initiative. UJA appreciates the renewal of the \$340 million grant (and the inclusion of \$15 million for a new round of funding for three-and four-year-olds in high needs districts) that supports New York City's Pre-K for All program in the Executive FY19 budget.

All of UJA's non-profit partners, who offer Pre-K services, provide programs and resources in their community. These programs offer extended hours and year-round care for children, which parents and/or guardians often rely on to continue to work to provide for their families. Many are extremely knowledgeable of the specific needs of the communities they serve, and offer instruction in languages other than English when needed. The State should offer more support to community based organizations so that providers can continue to support the growing needs of the communities each serves. One way to increase support for community based organizations is through reforming how Pre-K is financed at the state level. The FY 18 Enacted budget included language that proposed the consolidation of Pre-K funding streams. UJA recommends that the

state continue to transition to a single Pre-K program that distributes funding via an allocation aid formula.

### **No Student Goes Hungry Program**

Governor Cuomo's executive budget includes the creation of the "No Student Goes Hungry" program. UJA-Federation supports the creation of programs to ensure that students have access to healthy school meals regardless of income, resulting in healthy development and the ability to learn.

The rates of poverty, food insecurity and hunger remain staggeringly high in New York State. The most recent U.S. Census data found the overall poverty rate in New York State to be 14.7 percent and the poverty rate among children to be 20.4 percent. According to Hunger Free America, 12.7 percent of children in the State (one in eight) lived in food insecure homes between 2014 and 2016.<sup>1</sup> It is essential that the State continue to make the fight against poverty, food insecurity and hunger a top priority by investing in crucial hunger assistance programs.

Governor Cuomo's proposal includes a five point plan to ensure no student goes hungry. Banning lunch shaming, expanding breakfast after the bell, expanding the Farm to School Program, increasing the use of farm fresh, locally grown foods at schools and requiring food pantries on all SUNY and CUNY campuses will go a long way towards making sure that all children have access to the food they need to thrive in the academic environment.

However, not all students are included in these programs, specifically those students that attend schools that do not participate in the State Education Department funded school food programs. We urge the State to ensure that those students can also benefit from these important programs and have the resources they need to learn.

### **Adult Literacy Education (ALE)**

ALE funds English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE) and High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation classes. In New York City alone, there are an estimated 2.2 million adults that lack English proficiency, a high school diploma or both. There are 15,000 New York City residents are on a waitlist for adult literacy classes. Each of these programs strengthens the abilities of adults to compete in the job market and improve their financial well-being across New York State.

However, the Governor's Executive Budget Proposal cuts the addition \$1 million added by the Legislature in the FY2018 Enacted budget, funding ALE at \$6.2 million. We respectfully request your support for the restoration of \$1 million and the investment of an additional \$8 million in

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<sup>1</sup> Hunger Free America (2017). *Working New York Still Hungry: New York City and State Hunger Report*. <http://www.hungerfreeamerica.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/2017%20NY%20City%20and%20State%20Annual%20Hunger%20Survey%20Report%20.pdf>

ALE programs. This additional investment would raise ALE funding to \$15.2 million. Expanding ALE will allow for approximately 16,000 students to be served in New York State and counter the State's anticipated loss of Federal WIOA Title II funds. The current number of students served is about 5,700.

### **Conclusion**

UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration and support of these vital programs that assist our state's most vulnerable and neediest individuals and the organizations that serve them.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact Hillary Stuchin ([stuchinh@ujafedny.org](mailto:stuchinh@ujafedny.org) or 212-836-1722) with any questions.