

Joint New York State Legislative Hearing on the
2020-2021 Executive Budget Proposal: PreK-12 Education
Testimony of
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I am honored to testify on the proposed 2020-2021 Executive Budget on preK-12 Education. My testimony comprises three specific recommendations: It's not enough, it's not enough, and it's not enough.

But how and why it's not enough requires explanation.

It's not enough because the proposed 2020-21 fiscal year increase for formula aid statewide is \$578.5 million, the smallest increase since 2014-15, and \$200 million in targeted aid, a tempting trough that is unlikely to decrease inter-district inequities. The Governor's proposal is a little over a quarter of the \$2 billion increase the Regents determined is needed to best meet the needs of every student in New York by achieving equity, supporting early childhood education and English language learners, implementing New York's Every Student Succeeds Act plan, and enhancing efficiency within the State Education Department and among school districts.

It's not enough because the Foundation Aid formula requires significant restructuring. The Educational Conference Board, a statewide coalition of district administrators and parents, recommends reweighting categories of Foundation Aid to use funds more efficiently, basing assistance on student poverty, disability, enrollment growth, English proficiency, and population density. The current 12 percent of state aid from the special revenue fund that supplements district revenues through lottery receipts, video lottery terminals, and commercial gaming should be increased. Expanding revenues beyond these limited sources and increasing the state's share of district expenses would limit the need for local property tax revenues. See "Shift the Burden of School Finance to State," *Newsday*, March 18, 2018, <https://www.newsday.com/opinion/commentary/ny-school-funding-to-ny-state-1.17426529>

It's not enough because children in property-poor and high-needs districts often remain educationally impoverished while kids living in our wealthier, pervasively income-segregated school districts ride high. And they should ride high. We want the best for our kids, rich and poor alike. That is why we need a State constitutional amendment to replace the Court of Appeals' "sound basic education" adequacy standard with a standard of "educational excellence" tied to a funding escalator so that children living in property-poor and high-needs districts receive the same per pupil funding our wealthiest residents deem appropriate for their own children. See "An Excellence Escalator for State School Funding," *Gotham Gazette*, November 6, 2019, <https://www.gothamgazette.com/opinion/8898-excellence-escalator-new-york-state-school-funding-foundation-aid>

New York desperately needs a School New Deal: increased funding, a restructured Foundation Aid formula, and an Excellence Escalator so that accidents of birth and address don't determine children's educational futures. The Legislature has the capacity to convert these aspirations to reality, promising a more equitable and vital society for all New Yorkers. Thank you for this opportunity to support your efforts.