



Written Testimony of Maury Litwack, Executive Director, Teach NYS
Before the 2020 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Elementary and Secondary Education February 11, 2020

Good Morning Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Mayer, Benedetto and distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly Fiscal and Education Committees. Thank you for holding this important hearing, and for spending today listening to the diverse views in particular from both the public and nonpublic school communities.

Let me first state that we all appreciate the importance of good public schools. We know and appreciate the hardships faced by teachers and faculty and how hard parents in all schools work to make sure their kids get the best shot in life. It is a supreme duty incumbent on all of us, and we applaud all teachers and principals across our great state.

Today, we are here to address funding issues for nonpublic schools and the nonpublic school community.

Firstly, we thank the Governor for including funding for programs that serve as critical sources of aid for nonpublic schools across our state in his Executive Budget. Specifically, we are grateful that the budget includes increased funding totaling \$199 million for important programs like Mandated Service Reimbursement (MSR) and the Comprehensive Attendance Policy (CAP). Moreover, the Governor's allocation of \$25 million for security for vulnerable institutions is a recognition that all school children deserve to be safe in school, no matter who they are, where they are from or what practices and beliefs they have.

Historically, the budget has allocated \$15 million annually for the Nonpublic School Safety Equipment (NPSE) Grant. This translates into approximately \$37 per child. In response to recent events, New Jersey increased its allocation to \$150 per child for security, doubling its previous rate. **Teach NYS asks that New York, at a minimum, double the NPSE Grant to \$30 million, to provide greater protections to all children.** Now more than ever, with families increasingly concerned about security, all kids deserve a safe learning environment.

We are encouraged by the Governor's inclusion of the STEM reimbursement program at \$35 million for the continuation of this program from past years. This program recognizes the growing need for qualified STEM education teachers in nonpublic schools by providing grants to reimburse schools for costs of STEM education teacher's salaries. We believe this program holds great potential for ensuring that students are prepared for the future.

However, more needs to be done. Let me explain why.

The nonpublic school community is 1,600 plus schools strong, educating over 400,000 children in New York State. So, while the Governor's inclusion of the "STEM Reimbursement" program is encouraging, the current level of funding isn't enough. By August 1, 2018, the program had received 1,800 applications totaling \$81 million for FY 2018 alone. A whopping \$81 million. The current allocation is only \$30 million. The nonpublic school community – schools, parents, teachers - continues to sustain a backbreaking financial burden

Consequently, we need to take action in this budget. **We need to bring the funding for the STEM reimbursement program in line with the \$81 million in application demand.** We need a tangible increase in the assembly/senate budget proposals.

Nonpublic schools account for more than 70,000 direct jobs, including teachers, administrators and other staff. Additionally, over 15,000 people in New York have jobs that depend on providing private schools or their employees with suppliers or services. Our schools generate \$537 million in state and local revenues through such sources as employment taxes, social security taxes, excise taxes, and sales taxes. Investing in nonpublic schools bring significant return on investment the state.

Our state has made great strides in educational equity over the past decade. Let's not leave the nonpublic school community behind.