

**TESTIMONY**

**Joint Legislative Hearing of the**

**NEW YORK STATE**

**ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

**&**

**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, January 29, 2026**



**THE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS**  
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Good afternoon to Chairpersons Krueger, Pretlow, Mayer, Benedetto, and to your honorable colleagues of the legislature. It is a pleasure to be with you today, and we thank you for your continued attention to the needs of New York City's public schools and the students and educators they serve.

My name is Henry Rubio, and I am the President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). I offer this testimony on behalf of more than 18,000 in-service and retired principals, assistant principals, education administrators, and supervisors working in New York City public schools. CSA is also the collective bargaining representative for over 150 Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors working in city-subsidized early childhood education centers.

I am also pleased to testify in partnership with the School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS). We continue to stand together in advocating for policies that support students and recognize the essential role of school leadership in translating state priorities into daily reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the State's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027.

### **School Aid and Foundation Aid**

CSA recognizes that the FY 2027 Executive Budget reflects a historic scale of state investment, including a total state budget of approximately \$260 billion, an increase of \$1.6 billion, including \$38.35 billion in total School Aid, an increase of \$1.3 billion (3.6%). These figures reflect seriousness and sustained commitment to children and public education.

CSA similarly thanks the Governor for the continuation of Foundation Aid growth in FY 2027, including an increase of approximately three percent statewide, which translates to an additional \$779 million, bringing the total to \$27.1 billion. The proposal includes a 1% due minimum increase for all districts; we believe it should be an increase to 3% to keep up with inflation .

Foundation Aid is critical in ensuring that every child in New York City has access to a high-quality education. State funding currently only covers about one third of the total costs for New York City education, whereas it was split evenly with city funding twenty years ago. In New York City, these increases help stabilize budgets. However, they are quickly absorbed by baseline costs, including contractual salary increases, mandated services, inflation, and more.

At the same time, school leaders are serving student populations with unprecedented levels of need. New York City continues to experience record numbers of students experiencing homelessness, including students in shelters and temporary housing. The City has also absorbed a significant influx of asylum-seeking students in recent years, many of whom require bilingual staffing, translation services, mental health supports, and intensive family outreach. English Language Learner populations continue to grow, as do special education obligations.

CSA's concern is not solely whether Foundation Aid increased, but whether the formula is sufficiently calibrated to the complexity, intensity, and cost of educating today's students. We believe that the Foundation Aid Formula still needs long overdue changes that we have been consistently advocating for in recent years. To truly meet the needs of our students, the formula must be further revised to reflect current student demographics, shifts in education policy, rising educational costs, and the lasting impacts of the pandemic.

**Special Education Weights:** There are over 200,000 students with disabilities in New York City who deserve a fair and equitable education. The current formula applies the same weight to all special education students, regardless of whether the students have physical or intellectual disabilities as articulated in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The formula must reflect the varying levels of support required by different students. We urge the State to increase the special education weights and create tiered weights to ensure that resources are allocated to meet the specific needs of all students.

**Regional Cost Indexes:** The regional cost indexes that are part of the Foundation Aid formula, which account for varying labor costs across different regions of the state, have remained unchanged since the formula's creation. Meanwhile, the cost of living and operating schools in New York City 4 has increased significantly. The current federal poverty threshold for a family of four is just over \$30,000, which means something very different for a family in New York City due to the cost of living. The State regularly updates the building aid formula with a higher regional cost adjustment, and the Foundation Aid formula should receive the same consideration to reflect the true, elevated cost of educating students in New York City.

### **Mayoral Control**

The proposal includes an extender of NYC Mayoral Control. We support mayoral control. However, there must be adjustments to the current accountability structure to ensure transparency and the involvement of all stakeholders. We look forward to the Mayor's proposal on mayoral control before weighing in with your perspectives, and we anticipate robust conversations on the topic through the budgetary process.

### **Class Size Law Implementation**

Once again, the proposed state budget doesn't consider the financial impacts of the class size law on New York City schools. The Executive Budget continues Contracts for Excellence and maintains the associated Foundation Aid set-aside for the same schools at the same level as the 2025–26 school year. This continuity ensures predictability for districts serving the highest-need students and aligns with the State's commitment to uphold equitable funding.

However, the financial challenges of implanting the class size law remains acute. We urge an enhancement of Contracts for Excellence funding to support targeted class size reductions. While our public school system already meets the class size caps prescribed for the 2025-2026 school year, our union and its members have serious concerns about the future implementation of this law for many schools next school year and beyond. Our School Construction Authority has estimated it would cost tens of billions of dollars to create the required classroom space, and the

city must still hire thousands of new teachers as well as administrators to support and supervise all these new teachers.

We continue to collaborate with the city to develop a process to provide some schools with additional funding to enable them to comply with the law in the later years of the phase-in plan. More is needed. We of course support lowering class sizes, which research shows can lead to higher achievement, improved classroom management, and more effective differentiation of instruction. However, this additional funding is not nearly enough to bring the entire system into compliance

### **Early Childhood Education Expansion**

CSA strongly supports expanded access to early childhood education and applauds the Governor for proposing to increase the state investment in 3- and 4-year-old Pre-K programs by \$561 million (52.5%), particularly the increase in funding for New York City's 3K program by \$205 million. We also support the inclusion of \$1.5 million for the creation of the Office of Child Care and Early Education.

Early childhood directors and assistant directors experience these investments operationally. Program expansion increases licensing requirements, staffing complexity, credentialing oversight, family engagement demands, and instructional supervision. These responsibilities fall primarily on early childhood administrators, who are already managing extensive regulatory and compliance obligations.

From CSA's perspective, the concern is not only the scale of investment in early learning, but the absence of parallel investment in early childhood leadership capacity. Expansion without sufficient administrative and supervisory staffing accelerates burnout, increases turnover, and places program quality and compliance at risk.

Chief amongst CSA's concerns is the issue of pay parity for Early Childhood Educators (ECE). As I mentioned in my introduction, CSA represents Directors and Assistant Directors of Early Childhood Centers run by Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). As you know, early childhood education is not only vital in preparing children for kindergarten; it lays the foundation for their entire education, and by extension, their careers. The success and the expansion of the City's early childhood initiatives are dependent on these CBO directors.

There is an egregious salary disparity that has existed within our system for far too long. CSA has consistently demonstrated that CBO directors and assistant directors perform substantially equal work under similar working conditions as directors of early education programs operated in public school facilities. This pay-scale inequity not only smacks of racial injustice and patent unfairness, but also threatens to compromise the stability and quality of early childhood education. CBOs struggle to recruit and retain staff precisely because their salaries do not match DOE salaries; CBOs consistently lose staff to higher paying positions. Meanwhile, the DOE has asserted the same standards apply in all early childhood programs in New York City.

As long as CBO Directors are paid on a lower scale and treated like second-class citizens, they and the children in their care are stigmatized and branded as less important. The city's unwillingness to address this disparity communicates that the many families that utilize these programs deserve less.

### **School Leader Professional Development**

CSA's Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) is recognized for providing high quality professional development for school leaders in New York City. As the need for more school leaders grows each year, the demand for a diverse array of programming is also increasing.

CSA is advocating for an increase to the Executive Leadership Institute for an additional \$1.2 million to support the following ELI initiatives:

- To expand ELI's professional development services for school leaders, including developing more asynchronous professional development
- To support school leaders in the training and implementation of curricula and instructional practices aligned to the science of reading.
- To support school leaders with professional development on mathematics instruction, particularly given the Governor's proposed appropriations for evidence-based practices
- To provide all school leaders with training in applying restorative practices and implementing vital mental health programs.
- To expand our professional development on artificial intelligence and other related emerging technologies
- To provide a robust mentoring and coaching program to first-year principals through one-on-one exchanges
- To enhance the School Leadership Institute, our three-year educational program that supports newly assigned APs, Education Administrators, and ECE Directors.
- To enhance social-emotional professional leadership for supervisors to ensure the wellbeing of school leaders

Similarly, we must expand our Advanced Leadership Program for Assistant Principals (ALPAP), to attract and support school leaders considering becoming a school principal.

As always, we believe there is far too much turnover in school leadership throughout our city. Too many school leaders depart the system earlier than expected due to burnout from the mental, emotional, and physical toll that the job has taken on them and their families.

ALPAP helps school leaders and administrators develop leadership skills aligned with the NYC DOE School Leadership Competencies and supports them on their path to becoming principals. Components of the program include seminars, action research, in-person field experiences at colleagues' schools, and a mentor who is a current principal. Throughout the year-long program, participants expand their skill set, develop confidence, and grow a network for support and follow-up.

## **School Safety and Administrative Staffing**

The safety of students and staff is an urgent concern for CSA. Violence and tragedy continue to affect our students, their families, and our school communities, even leading to loss of life.

The Executive Budget includes \$466,000 to support the expenses of the New York Center for School Safety. We thank the Governor for this support. Continued investment in school safety infrastructure is essential to protect students and staff, foster positive learning environments, and reduce disruptions that impede academic progress.

Administrators are responsible for emergency situations, whether related to instruction, facilities, or threats to students and staff. School leaders also maintain a positive daily environment in every school and provide for fair and equitable discipline to help students improve their personal and academic development. An adequate level of administrative staffing in school buildings is essential for the health, safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

All New York City assistant principals are appointed through a hiring process that requires the input of teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders who deeply understand their value. For anyone who has ever spent time in a school building, it is immediately clear how profoundly assistant principals impact schools. They help maintain appropriate school climate, maintain compliance, lead professional development to shape instructional focus, conduct teacher evaluations, manage curricular and extracurricular activities, and promote student achievement and school performance, among many other responsibilities. Most importantly, assistant principals help provide for the security of school communities, the appropriate supervision of staff and personnel, and the proper management of school buildings.

However, there are still schools in New York City without an assistant principal, and these schools face serious safety concerns as a result. CSA supports legislation to require an appointed Assistant Principal in every school building in New York City.

Lastly, the Executive Budget also proposes the creation of a Sensitive Locations Protection Act within civil rights law. This provision would extend protections against civil arrest in defined sensitive areas, including public and educational institutions, absent a judicial warrant or order. This legislative approach responds to longstanding concerns about how federal enforcement actions can impact participation in core civic functions, like schooling. Codifying protections for sensitive locations helps to safeguard students, families, and school staff from undue disruption, reinforces trust in public institutions, and supports every child's ability to learn free from fear. Including schools explicitly in these protections underscores the State's fundamental responsibility to ensure safe, welcoming environments for all learners.

## **Cell Phone Policy**

We applaud the Governor for the vision and implantation of the new law that requires statewide restrictions on smartphones in K-12 schools. School leaders know firsthand that the excessive use of cell phones can have harmful effects, including disruptions in schools and distractions from learning. We thank the Governor and her team for working closely with our

union and its members throughout last year's budgetary process to ensure that the policy made sense for New York City's schools and provided our members with the flexibility they believe is important. As a result, the distraction-free policy has been a resounding success and will benefit our students and school communities for years to come. Given the inherent challenges in securing and safeguarding so many devices daily, we ask that State provide additional funding for lost or damaged phones.

### **Community Schools & Wraparound Supports**

The Executive Budget proposes to maintain the current community schools at the same levels as last year (approximately \$250 million statewide) and would also provide \$1.2 million for Technical Assistance Centers. We thank the Governor for this continued support, but more is certainly needed.

Community Schools are lifelines to disadvantaged communities, and we believe additional funding is needed. These school buildings are community hubs to deliver academic, health, mental health, nutrition and counseling services to students and their families. They work because they confront 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 too many schoolchildren unfortunately face every day.

These schools address challenges of historically underserved families related to poverty, homelessness, medical/dental issues, nutrition, and more. Through additional academic support, family engagement, and extended learning time, community school students attend school more often, score higher on statewide exams, and earn more credits annually than non-community school students. From the perspective of school leaders, these programs are not optional enhancements. They reduce crisis response demands and support student readiness to learn.

CSA urges continued, expanded investment not in community schools, but also in extended learning and after-school programming. The budget proposes to include the following appropriations for SED-administered after school and extended day: \$24.344 million for extended day/school safety programs, \$21.59 million to support school-wide learning grants for school districts in collaboration with not-for-profit community-based organizations, and \$116 million to Learning and Enrichment After-school Programs Supports (LEAPS). These programs and initiatives impact students tremendously; we urge the Legislature to fight for increased funds.

Access to nutritious meals is directly linked to student attendance, concentration, and overall health. The budget proposes \$438 million to continue universal free school meals for all students, a critical support that removes financial barriers to nutrition. We sincerely thank the Governor for sustaining universal free meals. Additionally, the proposal includes \$10 million to increase lunch reimbursement rates from \$0.05 to \$0.19 per meal for districts that purchase at least 30 percent of food from New York farmers, and \$3.049 million for summer food programs.

The Executive Budget also allocates \$26.058 million to reimburse districts for the education of students experiencing homelessness. We thank the Governor for recognizing the unique and

often invisible costs associated with serving homeless students. Stable funding in this area allows districts to provide continuity of instruction, transportation, and wraparound supports that are essential to academic stability for some of the State's most vulnerable children.

### **CTE & College-and-Career Pathways**

Our city's CTE programs are among the best in the nation, empowering our students with necessary skills for college and career success. They have proven to benefit students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, improving equity within our system. However, existing funding caps do not reflect the true cost of operating these programs, and CSA asks the state to increase that cap. In addition, 9th-grade students are currently excluded from funding; we urge that the state increase funding to provide our youngest high school students with earlier exposure to CTE.

We thank the Governor for the total appropriation of \$48.6 million for the College and High School Opportunity Fund, including \$37.5 million to continue existing pathways and technology early college high school programs, \$2 million to support new grants for pathways and teaching early college initiatives, and \$9.1 million for NYSED-authorized dual enrollment programs. However, we believe more is needed. Valuable investments in college-and-career pathways open doors for students traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary access. Early college and dual enrollment programs help reduce barriers to college completion, lower debt burdens for families, and align secondary schooling with workforce needs.

### **Other Appropriations**

The Executive Budget directs the Commissioner of Education to provide school districts with the best evidence-based practices for numeracy and mathematics instruction in grades 1–5. We thank the Governor for prioritizing evidence-based math instruction. Elevating instructional quality in early mathematics is pivotal: foundational numeracy proficiency is strongly predictive of later academic success. Providing districts with research-aligned guidance and supports will improve consistency in math instruction across schools and enhance outcomes from the earliest grades.

The Executive Budget includes targeted appropriations to strengthen math and science education statewide, including \$1.382 million for some math and science high schools, \$750,000 for the Middle School Expanded Mathematics Access Program, \$1.5 million for the Expanded Mathematics Access Program, and \$9 million for high-impact individualized literacy and math tutoring for students in high-need high schools. These investments recognize that improving math outcomes requires both early access to advanced coursework and intensive, targeted intervention where students are struggling most. By combining specialized schools, expanded access programs, tutoring, and regional capacity-building, the State is supporting both innovation and systemwide improvement in mathematics instruction.

The Executive Budget proposes \$1.265 billion to meet the State's share of preschool special education programs for students with disabilities. This funding demonstrates a strong commitment to equity and early childhood inclusion. We thank the Governor for fully supporting preschool special education. Early intervention is one of the most effective investments the State

can make; it improves developmental outcomes, reduces long-term costs, and ensures that children with disabilities enter kindergarten with the supports they need to succeed.

The Executive Budget includes \$5.8 million to support the remaining costs of Advanced Placement exam fees for disadvantaged students. We thank the Governor for this investment, which directly removes financial barriers to college-level coursework. Ensuring that cost does not determine who can earn college credit in high school promotes academic equity and expands postsecondary opportunity for students who have historically been underrepresented in advanced programs.

Lastly, the Executive Budget includes \$28 million to support the My Brother's Keeper initiative. The organization plays a critical role in addressing opportunity gaps and improving outcomes for boys and young men of color. Sustained funding ensures that mentoring, academic supports, and community-based interventions can continue to operate at scale and deliver meaningful, long-term impact.

### **Conversion Charter Schools**

CSA represents four unionized, conversion charter schools. CSA recommends the creation of a new category of support: "Conversion Charter School Supplemental Aid." 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. These costs are not covered under the regular charter school funding process, and financial relief, which would cost the State approximately \$3,000,000 per year, is urgently needed to protect the retirements of unionized teachers, supervisors, and other staff

### **Tier VI & COLA**

Tier VI remains unchanged in the FY 2027 budget. School leaders see firsthand how Tier VI affects recruitment, retention, and long-term career decisions, particularly for younger educators considering leadership roles. Without reform, leadership shortages and turnover will intensify.

CSA also supports cost-of-living adjustments for retirees. Caps placed on COLA-covered benefits erode the retirement income of affected retirees. Medical costs, including co-payments, premiums, and medication, have risen at a rate far higher than increases in the consumer price index (CPI). CSA supports legislation to provide cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to retirement system members. A cost-of-living adjustment will enable retirees to combat inflation and maintain their standard of living. Survivors' benefits should also be kept current.

### **Conclusion**

CSA recognizes the scale and seriousness of the FY 2027 Executive Budget and commends the State for maintaining historic levels of investment in children and public education. Our members are deeply grateful to our state leaders for your support of our collective work. During

your 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 and testify today.