

2026 ROCHESTER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Budget Testimony



Budget Testimony Before NYS Joint Legislative Public Hearing on the Executive Elementary & Secondary Education Budget by Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, Superintendent, Rochester City School District - January 29, 2026

Good afternoon, I am Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, Superintendent of the Rochester City School District. I want to extend a special thank you to the Chairs of these committees, the Rochester Delegation, and the entire Legislature. I am grateful for your commitment to meeting the unique needs of our District.

This is a year of recalibration and revisioning how we support students, teachers, and families. We are strengthening what works, addressing what does not, and aligning our system more intentionally around student outcomes. Through initiatives like Strive for Five, which focuses on improving daily attendance and reducing chronic absenteeism, and an emphasis on literacy, we are building the conditions students need to succeed academically and socially. Rochester serves one of the highest-need student populations in New York State. Our students bring tremendous potential into our schools every day, and they rely on a public education system that is adequately resourced, flexible, and responsive to their needs.

While we appreciate the proposed increase in Foundation Aid, recent State Aid runs reveal a significant concern that requires immediate attention. The flawed charter school transitional aid formula, coupled with mandatory charter school tuition increases, will result in a projected \$11 million increase in spending. In the 2026–27 school year, our District will pay more than \$155 million in charter school tuition and associated costs. Nearly thirty percent of Rochester's public school students attend charter schools. Their selective enrollment process impacts our District, which continues to serve a disproportionate share of students with disabilities and English Language Learners. These funding issues create an imbalance that threatens our ability to sustain core instructional programs and essential student supports.

We respectfully urge the State to reassess the charter school tuition model, expand transitional aid for high-need urban districts, limit charter school saturation in cities like Rochester, and strengthen accountability through a unified authorization framework.

The Executive Budget does not designate the additional funding for the Rochester School Health Services Grant. This \$1.2 million investment supports critical physical and mental health services that stabilize students, support families, and ensure children are ready to learn. The absence of this funding would have immediate consequences for our community.

As we look ahead, we ask the State to continue its commitment to predictable and flexible Foundation Aid, provide an allocation to expand Community Schools and extended-day learning, and support college and career readiness aligned with the State Portrait of a Graduate.

Finally, preparing students for tomorrow's workforce requires expanded investment in Career and Technical Education. We request an increase to the current \$4,100 per-student Special Services Aid cap and consideration of future funding to support middle school career pathways.

As we continue this year of recalibration, we ask the State to partner with us in ensuring funding systems are predictable, equitable, and aligned with real conditions on the ground. The choices made in this budget will determine whether high-need districts like Rochester can sustain the programs our students rely on. We ask for your partnership to ensure all public school students have access to opportunity and stability. Thank you for your leadership and continued support.