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Joint Legislative Hearing on the Executive Elementary and Secondary Education Budget

City School District of Albany 2026-27 Legislative Priorities

January 29, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Joseph Hochreiter and I am the superintendent of the City School District of Albany. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss our funding priorities as we look ahead to the 2026-27 school year.

The State of New York has made great progress in delivering fiscal equity for students, families and taxpayers in high-need school districts like Albany. In our school district, the commitment to fully funding Foundation Aid by the 2023-24 school year closed an annual shortfall of more than \$26 million.

As an urban school district that was under-resourced for years due to these funding inequities, we were grateful to reach that newly leveled playing field.

We continue to be grateful for the state's commitment to equity, and your recognition of our community's unique needs. That is reflected once again in Governor Hochul's budget proposal for next school year.

VISION STATEMENT

The City School District of Albany will be a district of excellence with caring relationships and engaging learning experiences that provide equitable opportunities for all students to reach their potential.

MISSION STATEMENT

We will work in partnership with our diverse community to engage every learner in a robust educational program designed to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for success.

It is uplifting for everyone in our community to know that you see us ... and you hear us.

Your hard work absolutely is making a difference in the outcomes – and the lives – of our students and families.

And your steadfast commitment to equity means even more in times like these. Albany is a richly diverse city that also faces a child poverty rate among the highest in our state and our nation.

There is so much that is uncertain for so many of our families.

It is reassuring to know that you have our back, and that you are committed to the same principles for every community in our state.

And, as we look nervously to the future, we ask that you maintain that focus – on funding equity, and on the unique needs of individual school districts and communities.

(pause for transition)

With this in mind, we would like to note some of the unique fiscal challenges we face here in the public school district that so proudly serves New York's capital city:

- 63% of our city's property is tax-exempt
- One in three children live in poverty
- Charter school oversaturation has for years been among the highest in our state and nation:
 - And a new charter school opened this year ... a new charter school is opening next year ... and still another new charter school looms for the following year.
- English-language learners comprise nearly 20% of our enrollment. We value all of our diversity deeply and are committed to providing the intensive academic programs and wraparound services that our ELLs need to thrive.

(pause for transition)

I would like to conclude by highlighting two priority areas for us in our planning.

Support to expand and diversify New York's teaching workforce

We know you are keenly aware of the looming teacher shortfall in New York, and we applaud the meaningful steps the state is taking to address this.

In Albany, we are planning for a new CTE education pathway to encourage our students to choose the teaching profession, and to prepare them for career success.

We are uniquely positioned for this through our longstanding commitment to our own robust CTE programming, and we are grateful to the state for encouraging and supporting growth in these critical areas.

Support for social-emotional and mental health services

We also commend the state for its commitment to students' social-emotional and mental health needs. This remains critical for school districts across New York, and certainly here in Albany.

In addition to numerous investments we have made in staffing and services in these areas over the past decade, we are working on a new partnership with Albany County that would put in place additional prevention-based structures for teens and families in our community.

(pause before concluding)

Thank you once again for this opportunity.