



THE 4201 SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

Testimony Presented to
Fiscal Committees of the New York State Legislature
Hearing on the FY 2026-2027 Executive Budget
Elementary & Secondary Education
January 29, 2026
Albany, New York

Cleary School for the Deaf (Nesconset) Lavelle School for the Blind (Bronx) New York Institute for Special Education (Bronx) New York School for the Deaf (White Plains) St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf (Brooklyn) St. Mary's School for the Deaf (Buffalo)	Henry Viscardi School (Albertson) Lexington School for the Deaf (Queens) Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf (Mill Neck) Rochester School for the Deaf (Rochester) St. Joseph's School for the Deaf (Bronx)
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Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Antony McLetchie, Superintendent/CEO of the Rochester School for the Deaf, and I serve as co-chair of the 4201 Schools Association. It is a pleasure to be with you today, and we are grateful for your continued support and friendship over the years.

Our eleven (11) not-for-profit state-supported schools serve children who are deaf, blind, or severely physically disabled across New York State. In recent years, many more of the children we serve also have additional disabilities – either physical, emotional or in cognition.

We would first like to thank the Assembly and Senate for your longstanding support for our students and schools. Your work to maintain and increase state support for our schools each year is impactful. We are truly grateful.

Like any school, the 4201 Schools need consistent, stable, and reliable funding to meet our students' needs. We request the Legislature's support for the following:

OPERATIONAL GROWTH

The Executive Budget proposes level funding for the 4201 Schools, which includes the growth added by the Legislature in the 2025-26 enacted budget.

Our students are public school students who need the expertise of our teachers and clinicians to access education. Whether using the Consumer Price Index or Foundation Aid growth, 4201 schools should be provided annual growth to account for increased costs.

Growth is necessary to meet the growing and diversifying needs of our student population:

- Many more of our students now have disabilities in addition to their primary diagnoses, requiring more intensive instruction and related services.
- Our teachers and clinicians are specially trained and certified.

- All of our schools serve students and families who have recently arrived in the United States.
- Many of our students' families are of modest means.
- Many students are from homes in which English is not their first language.

SALARY GROWTH & WORKFORCE RETENTION

Our schools' staff members are specially trained and certified to work with children who are deaf, blind, or severely physically disabled. Salaries for our teachers and clinicians lag those in public schools. We propose a the following to lessen the compensation gap:

- \$10 million program to infuse directly into our teacher and clinician salaries.

We are grateful for the *NYS Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, & Asian Legislative Caucus's* support of this initiative again this year, in their annual ["The People's Budget"](#) package issued recently.

FUND BALANCE

According to the State Comptroller, *"The practice of planning ahead and systematically saving for capital acquisitions and other contingencies is considered prudent management."*

However, all schools, except for our 4201 schools, are authorized to retain a small fund balance. Fund balances allow schools to prepare financially for variances or other contingencies, such as emergencies or adapting to student needs throughout the school year.

We request the authority to retain a reasonable fund balance to properly and prudently manage our school's finances.

CAPITAL SUPPORT

We would like to thank the Governor and the Legislature for investing in our school buildings and grounds. Our schools were established decades ago in communities around the State by philanthropic organizations, and most of our school buildings are now quite old. *For example, the New York School for the Deaf was founded in 1817, the New York Institute for Special Education in 1831, or my own school in 1876.*

Our facilities are aging, and our students should be afforded the same innovations for educational access as those served in the public sector. In addition, our building must be accessible to all students regardless of mobility and communication needs. Ongoing capital investments help to address maintenance needs that impact the health and safety of our facilities. We appreciate the State's ongoing support.

The 4201 Schools are proud to partner with New York State in ensuring high quality educational opportunities for students with low incidence disabilities. We take very seriously our responsibility to provide each of our students with a safe and healthy environment in which to learn, develop, and succeed.

We are truly grateful for the state support championed by the Legislature and the Governor, that sustains our schools and the students we serve.

Antony A.L. McLetchie
Superintendent, Rochester School for the Deaf
Co-Chair, 4201 Schools Association