

Special Acts

New York State Coalition of Special Act School Districts, Inc.

Special Acts provide **Equal Access** to a **Free Appropriate Public Education** for students unable to attend schools in their communities.

NYS Special Act School Districts

George Junior Republic UFSD
Freeville, NY

Greenburgh Eleven UFSD
Dobbs Ferry, NY

Greenburgh-Graham UFSD
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

Greenburgh-North Castle UFSD
West Harrison, NY

Hawthorne-Cedar Knolls UFSD
Hawthorne, NY

Little Flower UFSD
Wading River, NY

Mount Pleasant Blythedale UFSD
Valhalla, NY

Mount Pleasant Cottage UFSD
Pleasantville, NY

Randolph Academy UFSD
Randolph, NY

Executive Board Members

Stephen Beovich, President
Superintendent
Mount Pleasant Blythedale UFSD

Raymond Raefski, Vice President
Superintendent
Hawthorne Cedar Knolls UFSD

Dr. Harold Dean, Treasurer
Superintendent
Little Flower UFSD

Christina Torres, Secretary
Superintendent
Mount Pleasant Cottage UFSD

Dr. Emily Hersh, Coordinator
Superintendent - Retired

TESTIMONY ON THE FY 2026-27 EXECUTIVE BUDGET

Good Afternoon and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I am Stephen Beovich, and am the President of the New York State Coalition of Special Act School Districts and the Superintendent of Schools at Mount Pleasant Blythedale UFSD, A Special Act District in Westchester that serves medically fragile children.

First I would like to express our sincere gratitude for the additional school safety allocation the special act districts received, as well as for the thoughtful changes that have been approved to the rate-setting methodology over the past several years.

The safety allocation has allowed special act schools to begin to implement the same critical safety features found in traditional public schools. At Mount Pleasant Blythedale we will use these funds to construct secure entrance vestibules and implement a comprehensive lockdown system—improvements that directly enhance the safety of our students and staff.

The changes to the rate-setting methodology have been instrumental in strengthening our financial stability. These include the ability to retain reserve funds, the passage of legislation allowing us to retain interest and investment income earned on those reserves, along with the growth rates awarded over the past four years, and the implementation of the interim plus rate. These changes have enabled our districts to plan responsibly and focus resources where they are needed most. As a result of these targeted improvements, the Special Act Districts believe the current methodology, although not perfect, is now workable.

We are aware that a tuition rate methodology study is underway. While we previously supported a comprehensive overhaul, we now respectfully urge caution. We are advocating for only common-sense adjustments and continued incremental changes, as has been done over the past few years. We are concerned that the study could

unintentionally reverse provisions that have contributed to our current stability. We ask for your support in preserving these critical elements.

Finally, we recognize the constraints in this year's state budget. We respectfully remind the committee that Special Act schools serve the most vulnerable students in the state. Every additional dollar we receive through growth rates is reinvested directly into our programs to support those students—through expanded mental health services, career and technical education programs, instructional specialists, clubs and interscholastic sports.

We do not only want to meet IEP mandates, we want our students to have a full well rounded education as they would receive in a traditional public school.

Again, as you finalize this year's budget, we ask that you keep our students in mind by setting an equitable growth rate that at least matches the Consumer Price Index, just as you have done in the past. Thank you for your time and consideration.