



THE NEW YORK STATE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FEDERATION TESTIMONY

Education Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
2026-2027 Executive Budget Proposal
January 28, 2026
Testimony by Wayne Spence

Good afternoon Chairpersons Krueger, Prelow, Mayer, Benadetto and other honorable members of the Legislature. My name is Wayne Spence, and I am the president of the 55,000-member strong New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF). I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about Governor Hochul's 2026-27 Executive Budget. Our union is composed of professional, scientific and technical experts who provide critical services to the residents and taxpayers of New York State, including the staff at the State Department of Education, the School for the Deaf in Rome and the School for the Blind in Batavia, as well as the entities overseen by the Cultural Education Center – the State Museum, the State Archives and the State Library. PEF members take a great deal of pride in their work and the care they provide to New Yorkers.

PEF is pleased with many of the proposals advanced by Governor Hochul in the area of Education and urges your support for the following:

2026-27 Executive Budget Proposals

- A. **Operating Support for the Cultural Education Center** – (New York State Museum, State Archives and State Library and Study of State Museum) – State Operations Budget (S.9000/A.10000).

Governor Hochul and legislative leaders enacted a long-overdue and significant capital improvement plan for the NYS Museum in 2025. However, the Office of Cultural Education (OCE), the entity that maintains the State Museum, the State Library and the State Archives, has been operating at a deficit for years. The State Education Department had requested an infusion of \$12 million to support the operating needs of the OCE, including the NYS Museum, and PEF supported this request.

Stabilizing OCE's funding is critical to maintain the current professional staff as renovations begin at the State Museum and as the state works to maintain and update the state's collection and exhibits. It is anticipated that upon completion, the renovated New York State Museum will be more attractive to visitors and will deliver an experience that will keep visitors coming back.

As a destination location for students and visitors from across the globe that attracts more than 750,000 visitors a year, and as a world-class research facility that serves the entire state and beyond, the NYS Museum should be a showcase facility along with the NYS Capitol and the Empire State Plaza. This investment, coupled with the capital money incorporated as part of the “Championing Albany’s Promise” initiative, will generate increased tourism revenue for the state, the city of Albany and local businesses.

PEF BUDGET REQUEST:

Capital Plan: *SUPPORT* the Governor’s Capital Plan Reappropriation for “Championing Albany’s Promise.”

Operating Aid: *SUPPORT* the \$12 million increase in operating aid to the SED budget for the CEC to address years of stagnant state support.

B. **Transfer Physicians, Physician Assistants and Specialist Assistants Licensure**

Oversight from SED to DOH: (S.9007/A.10007 – PART N)

While not technically contained in the Education Budget, this proposal would shift oversight and licensure from the NYS Department of Education to the NYS Department of Health for physicians, physician assistants and specialist assistants. This proposal raises concerns as the Department of Health operates directly under the Executive Department, while the Department of Education operates under the NYS Board of Regents.

The New York State Office of the Professions currently regulates more than 50 different health care and other professions, including physicians, physician assistants and specialist assistants. The NYS Office of Professions serves as the sole licensure authority for all of these professions, each of which is regulated separately by a board of their peers.

PEF is unaware of any issues with the current protocols and procedures required for licensing these professionals through the existing process at the Department of Education. In the future, PEF is concerned that this change could open up the regulation of these professions to unnecessary political influence or expediency. Additionally, moving the

oversight for some titles from one agency to another could result in confusion for the professionals covered and/or a misalignment in licensure standards or practices between professions.

Despite being understaffed for over a decade, SED has done a good job managing the professions and PEF sees no reason to transfer this responsibility as the other health care professions remain regulated under SED.

PEF BUDGET REQUEST:

REJECT the transfer of healthcare professions from the Office of Professions at the State Department of Education to the NYS Department of Health.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns with you. We look forward to working with you to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to the educational and cultural opportunities of this great state.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wayne Spence

President, New York State Public Employees Federation