

## ***SAMPLE TESTIMONY ON FOUNDATION AID***

*Testimony for the state education budget hearing must be submitted to [wamchair@nyassembly.gov](mailto:wamchair@nyassembly.gov) and [financechair@nysenate.gov](mailto:financechair@nysenate.gov) by January 29<sup>th</sup> at 5pm*

### **Testimony for the Joint Legislative Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Proposal: Elementary and Secondary Education**

January 29, 2026

My name is Kulsoom Tapal, and I am the Education Policy Coordinator testifying on behalf of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, or CACF. CACF is the nation's only pan-Asian advocacy organization dedicated to advancing equity and opportunity for Asian American and Pacific Islander children and families. Our communities represent some of the most linguistically, culturally, and economically diverse families in New York State—yet they are too often rendered invisible in education policy conversations.

New York's students, regardless of income, language, immigration status, or housing stability, deserve well-resourced, safe, and accessible schools. For AAPI children and families, school funding is not an abstract policy issue—it directly determines whether students receive culturally responsive instruction, language access services, mental health supports, and stability in the classroom amid rising housing insecurity.

We are calling on Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature to fully fund the Foundation Aid formula with long-overdue updates, including:

- **Updating the Regional Cost Index, and**
- **Adding a per-pupil weight for students experiencing homelessness and students in foster care.**

While we appreciate that the FY 2027 Executive Budget proposes fully funding the current Foundation Aid formula, we are deeply concerned that it does not address critical flaws in the formula itself. As a result, New York City schools—serving the largest concentration of low-income AAPI students in the state—will continue to miss out on hundreds of millions of dollars, shortchanging students who already face systemic barriers.

CACF acknowledges the significance of the State fully funding Foundation Aid for the first time in 2023 after years of advocacy, and we recognize the Governor's proposal to continue full funding in FY 2027. However, the formula is now more than 15 years old and relies on outdated and incomplete measures of student need. It has not kept pace with rising costs, deepening poverty, or the realities facing immigrant and working-class families—particularly in New York City.

Last year, the State indicated it would reexamine the Foundation Aid formula, creating an opportunity to make meaningful improvements. Instead, the limited changes enacted in the FY 2026 budget resulted in New York City schools **receiving \$314 million less** than they would have if no changes had been made at all. This shortfall was driven by an update to the poverty

weight that relies on deeply flawed federal poverty guidelines and treats poverty the same across all districts, despite dramatically different costs of living.

For AAPI families, this failure to accurately measure need is especially harmful. Many AAPI students live in low-income or housing-insecure households that are not captured by traditional poverty metrics. Language barriers, immigration status, and cultural stigma often prevent families from accessing public benefits, masking the true level of need in our communities and leaving schools underfunded.

According to the most recent [census data](#), the poverty rate for Asian Americans in New York City is 16.0% and the near poverty rate is 20.2%. The proportion of uninsured Asian Americans in New York City is 7.3%. Among Asian households led by citizens and living below the federal poverty level, only 44.2% of them were enrolled in SNAP, the lowest of all major racial groups. 8.6% of the Asian households in New York City were overcrowded and 6.2% were severely overcrowded in 2020. Asian households had the highest rates of overcrowdedness and severe overcrowdedness compared to other major racial or ethnic groups in the city. 22.9% of the Asian rental households in New York City were rent burdened while 29.5% were severely rent burdened in 2020. These numbers demonstrate how regional cost must be calculated to accurately represent the needs of New Yorkers.

Without further changes, New York City students, including tens of thousands of AAPI students, will continue to be shortchanged. The FY 2027 Executive Budget maintains these shortcomings and perpetuates the loss of funding intended for low-income students.

We urge the Legislature to address these inequities by making the following critical updates:

- **Update the Regional Cost Index (RCI):** The Regional Cost Index is meant to reflect differences in wages and costs across the state, yet it has not been updated since 2006—nearly 20 years ago. In New York City, where many AAPI families face skyrocketing housing costs and economic precarity, schools struggle to retain educators and provide adequate services. Despite the Senate and Assembly proposing RCI updates last year, the enacted budget included changes only for Westchester County. The FY 2027 budget must update the RCI statewide, including for NYC, as proposed in S.8125/A.9049 sponsored by Senator John Liu and Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon.
- **Add a Weight for Students Experiencing Homelessness and Students in Foster Care:** During the 2024–25 school year, more than 154,000 New York City students experienced homelessness. AAPI families are the fastest-growing population in the NYC shelter system, yet their experiences are often overlooked. Students experiencing homelessness or foster care face significant educational disruptions, trauma, and instability—but the Foundation Aid formula provides no additional funding to support their needs.

The consequences are stark: more than half of NYC students experiencing homelessness were chronically absent, and one in eight students living in shelters dropped out of high school. For AAPI students navigating housing instability alongside language barriers and cultural isolation, these outcomes are even more alarming. The FY 2027 budget must add a per-pupil weight for students who are homeless or in foster care, as proposed in S.8139/A.9048.

In a city where over 150,000 students experienced homelessness last year, schools should not continue to be deprived of hundreds of millions of dollars meant to support low-income students. The Legislature must ensure that the final budget does not perpetuate inequities that disproportionately harm immigrant and AAPI communities.

**CACF is proud to join the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding—representing more than 120 organizations—in urging Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature to fully fund Foundation Aid with the necessary updates.** These changes are essential to ensuring the formula reflects today's realities and meets the needs of all students, including AAPI children and families who have long been underserved by our education system.

Thank you for your consideration.