



**NEW YORK STATE  
SCHOOL FACILITIES ASSOCIATION**

## **TESTIMONY**

By

NEW YORK STATE SCHOOL FACILITIES ASSOCIATION

On behalf of New York State School Facilities Association (NYSSFA) and our 600 School Facilities Professional members working in New York's public school districts and BOCES, we welcome the opportunity to share our thoughts and recommendations regarding the 2026-27 Executive Budget and our organization's 2026 policy priorities.

NYSSFA is a professional organization of dedicated professionals responsible for maintaining and operating thousands of school buildings and facilities across New York State and prioritizing the safety, health, and comfort of students and staff. Our state's school buildings are where students go to learn and grow, many professionals call work and are also central parts of our communities. Families gather at our schools to support their children's learning and achievements; our buildings and staff provide adult literacy classes in the evening and host sporting events on the weekends.

As a vital member of the state's broader community, our schools must meet the specific needs of our children, our families, and our neighborhoods. They must have adequate space, equipment, capacity and remain clean, bright, safe, and appropriately maintained. Investments in school buildings and grounds are imperative and contribute to long-term sustainability of how our schools can support the wellbeing of our communities.

School buildings and the expectations for our school community's responsibilities are constantly evolving, and facility professionals must be ready for the next step. The buildings we oversee have advanced beyond keeping the building safe, to where we must focus on how to maximize square footage and seating to ensure teachers can efficiently and effectively engage in student-driven instruction. New York State consistently makes critical investments in school facilities and grounds; this allows school facility professionals to maintain the facilities so everyone who uses the building is safe and secure.

The maintenance of school facilities, on any given day, requires a school facilities professional to work toward creating new infrastructure, maintaining quality spaces, or repairing complex equipment. Our members pride themselves on solving problems every day; we apply that approach in our advocacy. Our daily work is to maintain facilities that are inviting and suitable for learning, communicating to our students and staff that what they do in these buildings is important. The continued support and assistance provided by New York State, particularly as materials and labor continue to increase in price, is essential for us to do our jobs and we thank the State for that partnership.

## **2026-27 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSALS**

NYSSFA is pleased to see that the Executive Budget proposal does not contain any proposals to modify or reduce expense-based aids but instead fully funds them and, in some instances, increases funding. Over the past several years, school districts have been asked to support more building construction costs; any reduction in aid would result in a reduction in maintenance investments. Fewer maintenance investments result in a shortened lifespan of our school buildings and capital investments; this makes the additional allocation of funds for Building Aid even more vital.

Further, the proposal to allow the costs for ground-mounted solar panels and other renewable energy technologies to be included as part of a building's primary cost allowance for purposes of calculating Building Aid is impactful and should be adopted by the Legislature. It is crucial that school districts be positioned to take full advantage of opportunities to use energy-efficient and renewable technologies. Allowing Building Aid to support these projects will make them a more realistic option instead of an option for only the few districts with the dollars to support new and innovative equipment.

In addition to preserving the Governor's expense-based aid and renewables proposals, NYSFFA requests that \$500,000 be added to the budget for professional development funds for facility directors. Directors of school facilities are responsible for ensuring that school buildings function safely, efficiently, and economically and remain healthy environments for learning. They must have special knowledge and technical competencies to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff and are obligated to keep current on the latest rules, guidance and best practices to capably lead the operation of school buildings. Facility directors lead districts' work to comply with environmental and energy standards such as lead in water, green cleaning, heat restrictions and the transition to zero emission school buses. Like the shortage for many public sector positions statewide, there is a shortage of candidates to become school facility directors.

To help meet the need for new directors across New York, our profession relies on our School Facilities Management Institute (SFMI) to provide professional development opportunities on emerging issues. SFMI is a not-for-profit created by NYSSFA for the purpose of providing education and training programs to school facilities management professionals. SFMI's mission is to elevate school facility management through education, training and technical support to the highest level achievable; to further develop the professionalism and character of each facility manager; and to cultivate future facility managers by creating opportunities for those pursuing a career in the field. SFMI serves to develop existing school facility directors and assist those seeking to advance their careers. It takes professionalism

and continued training, which is why NYSSFA/SFMI requests \$500,000 to support access to professional development for school facility directors statewide.

## **2026 NYSSFA POLICY PRIORITIES**

### *Reject Harmful and Costly Construction Legislation*

Affordability is paramount when planning and executing construction projects for a school district. Most school capital projects require voter authorization of the identified purpose and funding for the project, state review of the plans, public advertising and solicitation of bids, and compliance with a plethora of wage and labor laws. Once bids are submitted, they are typically awarded to the lowest qualified bidder, and the district proceeds to seek additional required approvals from the State. School districts support fair wages and working conditions and when appropriate to support the needs of a project sometimes do enter into PLAs. But no matter the project, districts must consider the best way to maximize the value of taxpayer dollars while ensuring project efficiency.

Legislation (S.1672-B/A.756-A) that would require any school district on Long Island that plans a construction project with a total cost of \$1 million or more to enter into a project labor agreement (PLA) would increase the costs of these projects and restrict local choice.

Given that school construction planning is subject to numerous safeguards that ensure transparency, fair wages, competitive bidding, and state oversight to protect workers, taxpayers and ensure quality projects, enacting a mandate for districts in a specific region of the state will stymie local discretion and increase costs. This mandate would also be placed on one region of the state where there are particularly high costs already. Maintaining the status quo for construction projects allows a school district to utilize a contractor that can best meet the needs of the project with optimal efficiency, and maintain local choice and help keep project costs within a reasonable range.

### *Support Increased Capital Outlay Program Thresholds*

NYSSFA's support of an increased capital outlay threshold to bolster district expenditures goes hand-in-glove with our position on mandatory PLA legislation. School districts are currently authorized to spend \$100,000 annually on capital projects and receive Building Aid reimbursement on this spending the following year; the projects in this category are often inevitable and can become costlier and more urgent if delayed. Districts receive reimbursement faster than under regular Building Aid when using capital outlay, allowing a district to feel more comfortable with urgent expenditures. NYSSFA recommends growing the impact of the program with the following changes:

- Increase the limit to a minimum of \$250,000 adjusted by the Building Aid Regional Cost Factor up to a maximum of \$500,000. Authorizing a greater outlay limit will reduce the total funding needed for larger bond projects in future years, thereby savings money over the long term.
- Authorize use of capital outlays for multiple buildings in a single year. School districts are presently limited to using outlays funds on just one building. This causes significant constraints as some projects can be undertaken in multiple buildings at the same time, such as security system overhauls.
- Authorize multi-year project approval. Schools should be able to request project approval for multiple capital outlay projects for up to five years. Schools spend approximately 15% to 20% of the capital outlay limit on “soft costs”, such as design fees and other expenses. Allowing multi-year approval would reduce waste and increase the impact of these dollars.

In conclusion, we want to thank you for considering our positions and priorities. NYSSFA remains a resource to all legislators and staff on issues of the maintenance and operation of New York's public schools. We welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these issues further.