

# **TESTIMONY**

**Joint Legislative Hearing of the  
ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

**&**

**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**On**

**Executive Budget Proposals for Education**

**SFY 2017-2018**



**Tuesday, February 14, 2017**

**THE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS**

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Good afternoon, Assemblymember Farrell, Senator Young, Assemblymember Nolan, Senator Marcellino and your honorable colleagues.

My name is Mark Cannizzaro and I am Executive Vice President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). CSA is the labor union representing 6,100 active and 10,000 retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Education Administrators and Supervisors working in New York City public schools and five charter schools. CSA is also the collective bargaining unit for 200 Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors who work in city-subsidized Early Childhood Education Centers.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the Executive Budget for State Fiscal Year 2017-2018.

**Foundation Aid** - Like many education advocates you will hear from today, CSA believes the State must commit to fully funding the Foundation Aid formula within three years. In 2007, you enacted the Foundation Aid formula to support all school districts across New York State, and most importantly low-wealth school districts. The time has come to fulfill Foundation Aid's promise.

The Executive Budget proposal for Foundation Aid - a proposed \$428 million increase - is far short of what our schools need and what the formula would otherwise require. The Legislature's work in recent years to end the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) also distanced us from a functioning Foundation Aid formula. New York is now \$4.3 billion behind the full phase-in of Foundation Aid. The elimination of the GEA last year allows us all to turn our full attention and focus to the Foundation Aid formula. We

ask your support to fund Foundation Aid fully in order to provide adequate and equitable funding for our schools, and to reject the Executive Budget's proposal to repeal the Foundation Aid formula schedule.

**Community Schools** — The Executive Budget directs school districts to set aside a designated amount of Foundation Aid to support the transformation of school buildings into community hubs to deliver academic, health, mental health, nutrition and counseling services to students and their families. These are smart investments proven to improve student success and achievement. CSA supports the Executive Budget proposal to increase the current set-aside to a new total of \$150 million for 2017-2018.

Community Schools work. This initiative embraces concepts that CSA has long supported in New York City's "Renewal Schools." Community schools confront the problems faced by most struggling schools – problems that are largely societal issues outside the school building. Students must come to school ready to learn - and this can only happen if we recognize the limitations many of schoolchildren unfortunately face every day. Addressing issues relating to poverty, homelessness, poor home environment, medical/dental issues, nutrition and many other issues, form the basis for new services provided at a "community school". We are confident that these schools will show and sustain concrete results.

**School Leader Professional Development** —The role and work of instructional leaders has become even more crucial in recent years as policymakers have focused on supporting student achievement and eliminating college and career readiness gaps among our youth.

To ensure that school leaders successfully manage and meet ongoing challenges as well as succeed as instructional leaders, New York State must provide our Principal and Assistant Principals with access to ongoing professional development. The research-based literature related to effective schools and student achievement has long acknowledged the critical role of Principals in providing school leadership that will shape a highly complex human organization into a cohesive and collaborative community of learners.

A number of years ago, CSA established the **Executive Leadership Institute (ELI)**, a not-for-profit organization designed to deliver practical, relevant and essential professional development for today's school leaders. ELI provides standards-based, results-driven leadership training to help school leaders successfully fulfill their responsibilities as instructional leaders. We need to invest in more of this kind of high-level training and support. ELI's programs give school leaders the tools they need to create true learning communities.

We are grateful for the Legislature's support of ELI in the FY 2017-2018 state budget. This \$475,000 appropriation has sustained our work to provide much needed professional development services and mentoring to school leaders working in New York City public schools. ELI works with other professional organizations to provide professional development for Long Island and Upstate school administrators too. With your help and support, ELI's programs can grow, providing standards-based, high quality and

results-driven leadership training to help school administrators in New York City. We ask for your continued support of this important work.

**Conversion Charter School Supplemental Aid** – CSA represents a number of unionized conversion charter schools. Our unionized conversion charter schools continue to bear “legacy” costs that date from pre-conversion. Our charter school members report that pension and health insurance costs have risen dramatically in recent years, and can now comprise 12% to 22% of the entire operating budget for each school. Financial relief is urgently needed as these costs are not covered within the regular charter school funding process.

We support a new category of support: Conversion Charter School Supplemental Aid. Supplemental Aid to Conversion Charter Schools will sustain the collectively bargained benefits of union membership, chiefly retirement and health benefits. Conversion Charter School Supplemental Aid was included in the Senate’s “one-house” budget last year, and we ask your consideration again in 2017 to aid these schools’ workers.

**Dream Act** - CSA strongly supports enactment of the “DREAM Act” to continue New York's legacy of educational support for immigrant youth who attend P-12 public schools. We support allowing immigrant students to apply for state financial aid for higher education.

**School Safety**—CSA also endorses the Executive Budget proposal to continue NYSAFE Act funding in the 2017-2018 Executive budget, that provides enhanced aid for the purchase of stationary metal detectors, security cameras and safety devices for electrically operated partitions, etc.

However, we also stress and underscore that Principals - as the school leaders - must continue to be intimately involved in the development of school safety plans.

**Conclusion** - Our students deserve the best; we must provide them with the programs, services and supports necessary to prepare them for not only college and careers, but also for life.

New York State will be successful in educating our students only when we take the time to discuss, plan, implement and provide the necessary resources to our students. During the upcoming budget negotiations, we urge the Legislature to continue to advocate for students, teachers and school leaders as you always have.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

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