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TESTIMONY OF JAKE ADLER, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS FOR TEACH  
NYS TO JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET HEARING ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY  
EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 14TH 2017

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Good afternoon, Chair Farrell, Chair Young, Chair Nolan and Chair Marcellino, Members of the committees.

My name is Jake Adler; I am the Director of Government Affairs for Teach NYS, a project of the Orthodox Union. Thank you for allowing me to testify and for holding this important hearing, I know these are highly taxing on all involved and your commitment to these issues is inspiring.

There are more than 412,000 students enrolled in New York State's nonpublic schools, roughly 13% of the total Kindergarten -12 enrollment statewide. These are students of every race and religion, and every socio-economic background. These are students in Jewish, Catholic, Muslim, Protestant and secular schools who live everywhere from Long Island to the North Country, from Western New York to New York City. Parents choose to send their children to nonpublic schools for a variety of reasons including religious observance, the unique educational needs of their children, instruction style, and classroom size. Education is a very personal and complex choice for parents. No two children are the same, and every child has unique education needs. Many parents of nonpublic school children struggle financially to meet these needs. Socioeconomic factors and costs should not determine education quality for students.

Nonpublic schools are an integral part of New York's educational infrastructure. Nonpublic schools benefit taxpayers by \$11.4 billion annually, or by nearly \$23,400 per student. Parents who send their children to nonpublic schools pay thousands of dollars in school taxes, while alleviating the demand on public schools. Nonpublic schools create about 86,000 jobs throughout the state, pay workers almost \$3.9 billion in wages, and increase the size of the state economy by about \$7.1 billion.

Over the last few years, our state has focused heavily on STEM education. There has been new investment in ensuring that New York students have the proper foundation to compete in the new economy. My request this afternoon is that the Legislature invests in STEM education for all children, including the children in nonpublic schools.

Unfortunately, due to the high costs of STEM related instructors, and the already prohibitive costs of educating students, many nonpublic schools simply cannot retain STEM instructors and those that do often have difficulty keeping those instructors long-term. This poses a fundamental dilemma for our schools: pass along even higher costs to parents or reduce the investment in

STEM instruction. We need to match the state's commitment to STEM industry economic development, with investment in STEM education for all New York students.

STEM education for public school students serves a public benefit, by ensuring that our students are ready to compete in the global economy. We cannot compete as an economy, as a leader nationally and an economic beacon for the world if we leave 13% of our children behind.

Thank you.