

# TESTIMONY

Joint Legislative Hearing of the

NEW YORK STATE

ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

&

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Executive Budget Proposals for Education

Thursday, February 1, 2024



**THE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS**

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Greetings to Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Krueger, Assemblymember Benedetto, Senator Mayer, Senator Liu, and your honorable colleagues. It is a pleasure to be with you today, and we are grateful for your continued support over the years.

My name is Rosemarie Sinclair, and I am the Executive Vice President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA), offering this testimony on behalf of CSA President Henry Rubio, First Vice President Dale Kelly, and our entire leadership team. As you know, CSA is the labor union representing 6,100 in-service and 10,500 retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Education Administrators and Supervisors working in New York City public schools and four charter schools. CSA is also the collective bargaining unit for 170 Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors who work in city-subsidized Early Childhood Education Centers.

I am also here in partnership with the School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS). We proudly stand with SAANYS on the issues they also raise before the Assembly and Senate and look forward to our continued joint advocacy for the students of our great state.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the Executive Budget for State Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

### *School Aid & Foundation Aid*

CSA is grateful to state leaders for the historic investments in Foundation Aid approved last year. While we believe that the Foundation Aid Formula needs long overdue changes, we strongly oppose the proposed adjustments within the State's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025. Any process to revise the formula should be transparent, engage a wide variety of stakeholders, and allow schools enough time to process how changes to the formula will directly affect their individual school budgets. We urge policymakers to fund a study to reform the outdated formula to ensure that state resources meet the current, complex needs of our students and that funds are allocated equitably.

Simply put, the Governor's specific proposals in this year's budget will cause reductions in Foundation Aid funding for far too many schools. We caution

the State not to eliminate the “hold harmless” provision. Doing so would result in reductions for districts that should not be held accountable for enrollment losses due to a global pandemic and beyond their control. We also believe it is unconscionable to lower the inflation rate calculation and lock it in at such an unrealistic rate of 2.4%. We look forward to a more comprehensive conversation around necessary changes in the Foundation Aid formula in the coming weeks.

Finally, the proposed state budget doesn’t consider the financial impacts of the class size law on New York City schools. As a result, too many school leaders will be left without the resources to ensure a safe and high-quality education for all students, and schools will be forced to abandon programming that families have come to rely on. CSA fully supports smaller class sizes; however, without additional funding and space, the prescribed limits will lead to the displacement of students and severe program cuts.

While our public school system already meets the class size caps prescribed for the 2023-2024 school year, our union and its in-service members have serious concerns about the future implementation of this law for too many schools in the 2024-2025 school year and beyond. To comply with this law by 2028, New York City must hire 9,000 new teachers at an annual cost of \$1.3 billion to \$1.9 billion, according to the DOE and the Independent Budget Office. Our School Construction Authority has estimated it would cost tens of billions of dollars to create the required classroom space. The city, too, must subsequently hire additional administrators to supervise all these new teachers.

We have heard directly from hundreds of New York City principals who either don’t have the necessary funds to hire the additional teachers required by the new law or don’t have enough space to break students up into additional classes. If the city provides no additional funding to enable all schools to comply with the law in the later years of the phase-in plan, reducing class sizes will unfortunately force school leaders to cut resources from extracurricular activities, valuable enrichment, and/or intervention programs in their schools. What makes matters worse is that the loss of resources will more than likely harm our most vulnerable students in high-need communities. If schools must hire these additional teachers from within their existing budget, and without an increase in funding, schools may no longer have enough money for social

workers, arts programs, and additional support for unique student populations.

### *School Leader Professional Development*

CSA's Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) is recognized for providing high quality professional development for school leaders in New York City. As the need for more school leaders grows each year, the demand for a diverse array of programming is also increasing. CSA recommends a \$1,000,000 increase in support to the Executive Leadership Institute for a total appropriation of \$1,974,000 million, to support the following ELI initiatives:

- To expand ELI's professional development services for school leaders.
- To support school leaders in the training and implementation of curricula and instructional practices aligned to the science of reading.
- To provide all school leaders with training in applying restorative practices and implementing vital mental health programs.
- To provide mentoring and coaching to first-year principals through one-on-one exchanges as they assume the heavy responsibility of running their schools for the first time.
- To enhance the School Leadership Institute, our three-year educational program that supports newly assigned Assistant Principals, Education Administrators, and Early Childhood Directors.

Similarly, we must expand our Advanced Leadership Program for Assistant Principals (ALPAP)<sup>1</sup>, to attract and support school leaders considering becoming a school principal. This is vitally important as we anticipate a high turnover in school leadership in coming months.<sup>2</sup> Many school leaders delayed their retirement during the pandemic so that they didn't leave their school community stranded at a particularly vulnerable time. Others are departing the system earlier than expected due to burnout from the mental, emotional, and physical toll that the job has taken on them and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://elipd.org/leadership-program/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/why-school-leaders-are-considering-an-early-exit-one-principals-take/2020/08>

ALPAP helps school leaders and administrators develop leadership skills aligned with the NYCDOE School Leadership Competencies and supports them on their path to becoming principals. Components of the program include seminars, action research, in-person field experiences at colleagues' schools, and a mentor who is a current principal. Throughout the year-long program, participants expand their skill set, develop confidence, and grow a network for support and follow-up.

There is no entity that has done more to recruit, train, and retain school principals than ELI. As our system faces increasing challenges in recruiting and retaining principals, we ask that you increase the city's investment in ELI and its flagship principal preparation program, ALPAP.

### *School Safety & An Assistant Principal in Every School*

The safety of students and staff is an urgent concern for CSA. A brutal wave of violence and tragedy has affected our students, their families, and our school communities in recent months, with some even leading to loss of life. We have seen significant upticks in incidents that typically result in suspension, in the number of weapons being confiscated in our school buildings, and in assaults against students, teachers, and administrators.

School leaders maintain a positive daily environment in every school and provide for fair and equitable discipline to help students improve their personal and academic development. Administrators are also responsible for emergency situations – whether related to instruction, facilities, or threats to students and staff. An adequate level of administrative staffing in school buildings is essential for the health, safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

All New York City assistant principals are appointed through a hiring process that requires the input of teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders who deeply understand their value. For anyone who has ever spent time in a school building, it is immediately clear how profoundly assistant principals impact schools. They help maintain appropriate school climate, maintain compliance, lead professional development to shape instructional focus, conduct teacher evaluations, manage curricular and extracurricular activities, and promote student achievement and school performance, among many

other responsibilities. Most importantly, assistant principals help provide for the security of school communities, the appropriate supervision of staff and personnel, and the proper management of school buildings.

Our collective bargaining agreement states that it is a best practice for every school to have an Assistant Principal, yet there are still 57 schools in New York City without an assistant principal. These schools face serious safety concerns as a result. CSA supports legislation to reinforce the need for appropriate supervision by requiring an Assistant Principal in every school building in New York City; [S.1397 \(Liu\)/A.2605 \(Hyndman\)](#).

### **Tier VI**

The enactment of Tier VI has had a negative impact on recruiting and retaining school leaders. Our Tier VI members will earn significantly reduced makes public service employment less attractive as a career choice and discourages people from remaining in the public service for an entire career. CSA supports reforms to Tier VI to incentivize the recruitment and retention of future school leaders.

### **Diminution of Retiree Health Insurance Benefits**

Health insurance coverage is vitally important to retirees and their dependents. CSA strongly supports legislation to prohibit the diminution of health insurance benefits of public employee retirees or the reduction of an employer's contributions for such insurance. We believe that retirees' health coverage should be absolutely protected, and that a consistent standard to safeguard all retirees' coverage is necessary. We support [S.4191-A \(Lanza\)/A.4989-A \(Weprin\)](#) and urge its passage and enactment into law.

### **Cost of Living Adjustment for Retirees**

Caps placed on COLA-covered benefits erode the retirement income of affected retirees. Medical costs in particular - including co-payments, premiums, and medication - have risen at a rate far higher than increases in the consumer price index (CPI). CSA supports legislation to provide cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to retirement system members. A COLA will

enable retirees to combat inflation and maintain their standard of living. Survivors' benefits should also be kept current. CSA supports the following bills: S.5809 (Gounardes)/A.6639 (Pheffer-Amato), S.6160 (Jackson)/A.6640 (Pheffer-Amato), S.6252 (Jackson)/A.6638 (Pheffer-Amato).

### Conclusion

Our members are deeply grateful to our state leaders for your support of our work. During your 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.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Sinclair  
Executive Vice President

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