



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

## Senate Republicans Unveil Legislative Package To Keep Education A Priority For All New Yorkers

ANDREW J. LANZA January 30, 2024



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*“While school children fell behind because of misguided policies during the pandemic, Governor Hochul and her radical allies support spending billions of dollars on illegal migrants instead of students who deserve a top-notch education. I urge the Governor to reverse course and support New York’s students and families,” said Senate Deputy Republican Leader Andrew Lanza.*

**Albany, NY**-The New York State Senate Republican Conference today unveiled a legislative package aimed at keeping education a priority for all New Yorkers. Key among the legislative package's provisions is reversing the devastating cuts to schools that Governor Hochul included in her budget proposal.

The elimination of the "hold harmless" provision that provides critical stability to local school districts is a glaring example of Albany Democrats' misplaced priorities. This bloated \$233 billion budget siphons state aid away from local schools while dedicating \$2.4 billion in taxpayer dollars earmarked for migrants, bringing the total to \$4.3 billion over the last two years.

The migrant crisis continues to get worse because the Democrats refuse to put an end to wrongheaded sanctuary city policies. Instead, they continue to throw more money at the issue and away from programs that provide for our New York families, including school aid.

Education should always be among the top priorities for state government, and the Senate Republican Conference is committed to ensuring that New Yorkers' hard earned tax dollars help schools obtain the resources they need.

"The Governor's budget is yet another example of the complete disregard for New York families and taxpayers. \$4.3 billion over two years will be used to address the migrant crisis that was caused by open borders and sanctuary city policies supported by Democrats. At the same time, they are stripping millions of dollars from rural and suburban school districts. We are tired of misplaced priorities from Albany's One-Party Rule, and our conference will fight to get all school districts the funding they deserve," **said Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt.**

“As the Ranker on the Senate Education Committee, I jokingly say that before I became a legislator, I had a real job: I was a special education teacher, ran a resource room and helped students with their individual education plans. We can’t build a budget off the backs of students, their education, and local taxpayers. Students are already behind due to Covid and being out of the classroom for so long. Instead of the Governor urging the president to secure the border, she’s looking to redistribute state funds from other pressing needs and spend \$2.4 billion for migrants who are being treated like pawns on a chessboard. Meanwhile, the Governor is slashing the hold harmless funding for the education of students across the state including cutting \$6.692 million in funding for seven schools in my senate district. That’s totally unacceptable. When the Governor’s spending priorities are on those who are here illegally instead of educating our citizens, is it any wonder why New York residents are fleeing our state in droves?” **said Senator Jim Tedisco, Ranking Member of the Senate Education Committee, SD 44th.**

“Governor Hochul’s budget proposal diverts much-needed state funding from our schools, leaving our teachers without the tools and resources they need to teach and our children without the tools and resources they need to succeed, all while giving \$2.4 billion to perpetuate a self-created migrant crisis. It is nothing short of governmental malpractice. Maybe to the Governor these are just numbers on a chart, but these are our children, and we will not let her place the burden of her failed policies on our children’s backs. We will fight for our kids,” **said Senator Jack Martins, Vice Chair of the Senate Republican Conference, SD 7th.**

“56 schools on Long Island are slated to receive huge cuts – a total of \$43 million dollars. Educating our children should be the priority, providing 2.4 billion of taxpayer money and housing illegal migrants in our schools is simply wrong. Students should not miss one day of education just because state and city officials cannot manage the self inflicted migrant crisis. I have a bill that prioritizes and ensures our children will not allow the housing of migrants

in our K-12 classrooms,” **said Senator Alexis Weik, SD 8th.**

“Students statewide should have access to a quality education that prepares them for future success – regardless of where they live. The governor’s budget is gutting many of the schools I represent and the elimination of the “hold harmless” provision will be devastating for districts that are already struggling. We need to reduce state mandates that are burdensome and unnecessary and ensure that our schools – all of our schools – are receiving their fair share of state aid,” **said Senator Peter Oberacker, SD 51st.**

The legislative package unveiled today includes proposals that will keep our students safe and improve educational outcomes in school throughout the state:

- **Reversing misguided changes in the education formula proposed in the Executive Budget that will take resources away from our local schools;** and
- **Closing the pandemic learning loss gap** by ensuring unspent Federal emergency relief aid supports academic recovery programs, expanding state grant funding, creating an office in the State Education Department to track outcomes of such programs and focusing on future aid increases for early education to ensure students are provided a solid foundation for future academic challenges; and
- **Prohibiting the housing of migrants in K-12 schools or on school grounds throughout the state** (S.7391, Senator Alexis Weik); and
- **Committing greater resources for school building security** by creating a school resource officer program to permit the employment of retired law enforcement officers and provide grants to school districts and non-public schools. (S.4985, Senator Oberacker).

“A formula that increases total education spending by hundreds of millions of dollars while imposing drastic cuts on high-need districts across the state is totally bogus. Schools in my

district are facing \$3 million in cuts at a time when they need resources to reverse the damage done by excessive school closures during the pandemic, combat an evolving youth mental health crisis and keep kids safe. Every single member of the Legislature should make it clear to the governor that we won't pass a budget without restoring these cuts," **said Senator Jake Ashby, SD 43rd.**

"It was just one short year ago that Governor Hochul touted her administration as the one that finally lived up to the commitment to fully fund foundation aid. However, this year's aid cuts are a complete reversal of that promise. Schools in my district would lose approximately \$11 million under the Executive Budget which would be devastating to student programming, staffing and services. This is particularly inexcusable given that \$2.4 billion is being diverted to NYC to fund one-party rule's costly sanctuary policies. Our students and local taxpayers should not be the casualties of Democrats' radical agenda," **said Senator George Borrello, SD 57th.**

"I am deeply concerned about the proposed cuts in state aid to several school districts in Senate District 9, particularly Long Beach, facing a \$4.3 million reduction, one of the highest in the state. This reduction is especially troubling in the face of the Governor allocating \$2.4 billion to the self-created migrant crisis in her record breaking \$233 billion budget. Continued investments in our schools is vital to ensure that more New Yorkers don't leave our great state. The 2023 initiative to fully fund Foundation Aid marked an important stride but any reduction in funding to our schools would be a detrimental setback, and I will strongly advocate against any reduction in foundation aid. It's crucial that we continue to maintain substantial financial support for our schools, fostering a thriving educational environment which contributes to the well-being of our communities. Any decrease in these crucial investments would constitute a devastating step backwards," **said Senator Patricia Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, SD 9th.**

“While I think the direction being pursued to fully fund foundation aid is the right thing to do, the governor’s proposal regarding aid for schools will have a detrimental effect on many districts in the state, especially rural ones in Upstate New York,” Sen. Griffo said. “These districts rely on these funding mechanisms to support important student services and enhance the education that they provide to students. This proposed reduction in aid – in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars - could result in program and staffing cuts, which will hurt our schools and our children. I will continue to work to ensure that school districts have the resources they need to provide students with a high-quality education,” **said Senator Joseph Griffo, SD 53rd.**

“I’ve been working with our school leaders and I am advocating strongly for funding to be restored to protect our children and property taxpayers. Our schools are managing an increased need for mental health services, issues of food insecurity, staffing challenges, higher insurance and utility costs, and unrealistic state mandates like electric school buses which I oppose. We should be prioritizing our children and their futures. There is over \$2 Billion going to the migrant crisis yet we are cutting millions from our schools? That will only create a new crisis. Our children should come first,” **said Senator Pam Helming, Chair of the Republican Conference, SD 54th.**

“It is critical that we continue to be vocal with Governor Hochul and I’m proud to stand with my colleagues to provide real solutions that will help our schools, our teachers and our taxpayers. The cuts she is proposing will force our schools to cut services for our children, increase taxes on homeowners and lay off our teachers, administration and staff. We demand that our state does better. Instead of misusing \$2.4 billion on her self-created migrant disaster, Governor Hochul should ensure that all of our schools get their fair share and all of our children get the education they deserve,” **said Senator Mario R. Mattera, SD 2nd.**

“Providing hope for our future is not possible if we fail to provide a quality education to our next generation. Sweeping millions from our children's education while simultaneously increasing the amount spent on a self imposed migrant crisis, is not only irresponsible, it's a slap in the face to every hard working, law abiding, tax paying person in this state. Reversing the Governor's proposed school funding cuts is a top priority for me and for our conference,” **said Senator Dean Murray, SD 3rd.**

“We desperately need to get New York State’s fiscal house in order. But it’s outrageous for Governor Hochul to target small, largely rural school districts, with small tax bases and overburdened property taxpayers, across my legislative district and throughout the Upstate region as a way to redirect millions of dollars to close budget gaps of the Democrats’ own making and keep funneling billions of taxpayer dollars to the Albany Democrats’ far-left, largely New York City-based agenda and migrant crisis. That’s not an answer to this state’s deep-rooted fiscal irresponsibility. It’s just redirecting misguided priorities that won’t move us any closer to fiscal stability, taxpayer relief, or long-term affordability and sustainability for most New Yorkers,” **said Senator Tom O’Mara, SD 58th.**

“The safety, success, and well-being of our students should always be a top priority. The Governor’s proposal to change the school aid formula and hastily eliminate the hold harmless provision while simultaneously increasing the state budget to give billions to address the self-inflicted migrant crisis, millions in theft prevention due to lack of action on bail reform, and millions for swimming pools shows her priorities are truly misguided. The Governor’s proposed changes in education funding would cut over \$4 million in school aid - in just my Senate District alone. We must empower our teachers and students to be their best and chart our students on a course for a lifetime of success. The legislative package unveiled today has meaningful action items that put our students first and serves as a much-needed step towards ensuring the safety of our students and improving their

educational outcomes. By tackling these issues head-on, this legislative package reaffirms our commitment to the hardworking taxpayers of New York and shows our support for the well-being of our students and the quality of education they receive. As the budget process continues, I remain undeterred and ready to fight for our teachers, schools, and families to ensure our children get the quality education they deserve.," **said Senator Steven Rhoads, SD 5th.**

"As a parent, former mayor, and now state Senator, I understand how important public education is to the life of a community. I am extremely disappointed in Governor Hochul's latest budget proposal and the myriad ways in which it shortchanges our students and places additional burdens on parents, faculty, and administrators. Costs are up across New York; proficiency rankings are down. Now is not the time to deprive Hudson Valley schoolchildren of a quality education in order to subsidize yet another special interest scheme out of Albany. As budget talks progress, I'll continue to work with our local partners and fight for our fair share of state education aid," **said Senator Rob Rolison, SD 39th.**

"Ensuring all our students receive a quality education is one of the most important things we can do. Instead of making that possible, Governor Hochul proposes shortchanging upstate schools by eliminating the 'hold harmless' provision and cutting funding in favor of New York City. The plan my Senate Republican colleagues and I propose would ensure fair funding for our schools, giving all our children and educators the resources and support they need. It would also ensure our schools are secure, allowing for the safe environment necessary for learning. Our schools should be our top priority and it's time the governor and Democrat leaders treat them as such," **said Senator Dan Stec, SD 45th.**

"The governor's proposed budget involves allocating 2.4 billion dollars to migrants, achieved partly through reductions in school funding. While concerning, there's still an opportunity



for the legislature to reverse this outrageous proposal," **said Senator Bill Weber, SD 38th.**

The legislative package outlined today is the first in a series of comprehensive proposals that will be put forth by the Republican Conference this session in order to assure New Yorkers that our children's education will remain a top priority.

Earlier this month, Senate Republicans unveiled the "A New Hope for the Empire State" 2024 Legislative Agenda. A New Hope for the Empire State agenda prioritizes the issues that affect everyday New Yorkers, but have been neglected by the radical left politicians who control Albany:

- A plan to increase affordability;
- Improve public safety; and
- Build a greater New York.