



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

## WNY Legislators Push To Prevent Cuts To State Education Aid

SEAN M. RYAN March 15, 2024

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Senator Sean Ryan speaks at Williamsville South High School, March 15, 2024

Lawmakers, Teachers Union, Local Superintendents Call for Rejection of Proposals that Would Reduce Funding for New York School Districts

**WILLIAMSVILLE, NY** – Today, March 15, 2024, State legislators representing Western New York joined representatives from New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and superintendents from several local school districts at Williamsville South High School to urge action to prevent funding cuts in the state budget that would affect school districts in

Western New York and across New York State.

The Executive Budget Proposal released in January includes two significant changes to education funding. First, it does away with the “hold harmless” provision that ensures school districts do not receive less aid year over year. Second, it changes the formula for determining the amount of Foundation Aid each school district receives, which would result in school districts in Erie County and throughout New York State receiving less funding than they budgeted for based on previous projections.

The Senate and Assembly One-House Budget Proposals passed this week both reject the proposed changes in the Executive Budget that would result in school budget cuts, and instead increase funding by at least 3% for every school district across New York. The final state budget will be negotiated based on the three budget proposals over the coming weeks.

**Senator Sean Ryan** said, “We need to listen to school administrators when they tell us what they need, and that means prioritizing school funding in the state budget. Providing ample funding for education is an essential investment in our children’s future and, by extension, the future success of New York State. We need to continue to build on the years of progress that have culminated in the full funding of Foundation Aid and pass a budget that puts education first.”

**Assemblymember Karen McMahon** said, “New York State’s education system is not the place to cut corners. Education is the foundation of our kids’ social and emotional growth, and forges a path to advanced studies, careers, and meaningful participation in society. We in the State Legislature will continue to prioritize an education budget that invests in students and their futures, while recognizing the increasing challenges on schools and teachers.”

**Assemblymember Bill Conrad** said, “When we marked an historic achievement last year with the full funding of Foundation Aid, we signaled our collective commitment to upholding and advancing the quality of public education in New York State. To suddenly reverse course now and reduce that aid to districts - this is a shocking and short-sighted proposal, and as a former teacher, I know all too well the damage it would cause, forcing cuts in staff, in arts, music and sports programs, and in supports for special-needs kids. I am proud to stand with my colleagues in a bipartisan rejection of this executive budget recommendation.”

**Assemblymember Jon Rivera** said, “If the state passes a budget which delivers fewer Foundation Aid dollars to our local school districts, we threaten to reverse years of progress made to properly fund our state’s education system. We have made great strides in the past few years by advocating for the restoration of Foundation Aid funding, but proposed cuts in this year’s budget could undo that momentum. I support a state budget that delivers a victory to families and students who deserve every last cent funding their well-rounded education and every possible dollar investing in the future of the state’s next generation of leaders.”

**Assemblymember Monica Wallace** said, “If we want students to thrive, we must adequately fund our schools. We should not be balancing the New York State budget on the backs of kids who are still reeling from pandemic learning loss. Now more than ever, we must invest in our children. They are the future.”

**Melinda Person, President, New York State United Teachers**, said “The Legislature has clearly shown with their budget proposals that education is a top priority. Now is hardly the time to cut funding. Great things are happening in our public schools, and we see across the state that our students, families and communities need them — and the vital wraparound supports they provide — more than ever.”

**Dr. Darren Brown-Hall, Superintendent, Williamsville Central School District,** said, “As we support our students and families in a Post-COVID educational environment, we are acutely aware of the academic needs and mental health supports students require. The Foundation Aid formula changes that reduce funding to school districts cannot happen as we deliver more services to our students and enhance the educational experience they receive in our schools. An examination of a true and fair Foundation Aid formula must be initiated that will result in providing the necessary funding for schools to continue to be the educational pillars our community depends on.”

**Dr. Tonja M. Williams, Superintendent, Buffalo Public Schools,** said, “Western New York and our communities are only as strong as their school districts, that’s why having a proper state funding is so important. I am pleased to stand in solidarity with my fellow superintendents and with Senator Ryan, Assemblymember McMahon, Assemblymember Conrad, Assemblymember Rivera, and Assemblymember Wallace in their call to put education funding first in this year’s state budget. Reducing funding to schools would have adverse effect on school districts throughout our region.”

**Dr. Michael Ginestre, Superintendent, Sweet Home Central School District,** “The promise by New York State to fully fund Foundation Aid appears to be broken. The manipulation of the formula means Sweet Home, like hundreds of other school districts across New York State, will not receive its fair and equitable share of state funding. I stand with our state legislators in holding those in Albany accountable so live up to their promise to fully fund the Foundation Aid formula.”

**Sabatino Cimato, Superintendent, Kenmore Town of Tonawanda School District,** said, “Because of the proposed changes to the Foundation Aid formula and removal of the ‘Save Harmless’ provision, school districts throughout the state are facing devastating reductions while they are already struggling with unprecedented inflation and increased costs. We were grateful

for Gov. Hochul's decision to fully fund Foundation Aid in previous years. We look to her to maintain that commitment so schools will not be deprived of the resources needed to provide every child with a quality, equitable education."

**Anthony J. Panella, Superintendent, Amherst Central School District** said, "School districts need predictability and stability in state funding in order to plan effectively. A predictable and consistent funding formula is very important for us to continue to improve educational opportunities for students and expand the ways we support our families. I am thankful our state representatives have developed one-house budgets which prioritize education funding for 2024-25. We are grateful for their work to reject the governor's proposal to eliminate Save Harmless from the Foundation Aid formula and reject the planned decrease in the inflationary adjustment factor used in the formula. We commend previous legislative achievements that resulted in fully funded Foundation Aid and believe continued work toward a fair and equitable formula is critical to maintaining high-quality schools across the state."

**Brian Graham, Superintendent, Grand Island Central School District**, said "Our public schools stand as beacons of hope and centers of community engagement, shaping the minds and futures of our children. Yet, under the governor's first draft of the executive budget, districts across New York State are facing significant cuts in Foundation Aid. I am grateful for our New York State representatives who are listening and taking significant action to restore the 'Hold Harmless' provision and increase funding by 3% for all districts in New York State. Thanks to the Senate and Assembly One-House Budget Proposals, our students will benefit by the commitment and eventual action demonstrated today by our legislators."