



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert Jackson

Senator Jackson Critical of Governor's Education Remarks, Announces Fact-Finding Tour in Districts Throughout New York State

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| ISSUE: **EDUCATION FUNDING**

For Immediate Release: 16 January 2019

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SENATOR JACKSON CRITICAL OF GOVERNOR'S EDUCATION REMARKS,

ANNOUNCES FACT-FINDING TOUR IN DISTRICTS THROUGHOUT NEW YORK STATE

(New York, NY) Senator Robert Jackson (SD 31) criticized Governor Cuomo's remarks on education funding during yesterday's State of the State address in Albany. The Governor obfuscated the core issue of inadequate statewide education funding by focusing on misleading evidence of maldistribution within school districts. To communicate clearly the funding problems in education, Senator Jackson is committed to doing a fact-finding tour in districts throughout the state.

Governor Cuomo called for a scant increase of roughly \$340 million in Foundation Aid, the formula for school funding developed by Governor Spitzer and the legislature in response to the decision by New York State Supreme Court on a lawsuit Senator Jackson filed in 1993

called the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE). The successful suit prompted the Foundation Aid formula as a means of fully funding a quality public education in primary and secondary schools across the state. The Regents recommended \$1.66 billion in Foundation Aid this year, with a three year phase in of the Foundation Aid owed. Under current state law \$4.1 billion in Foundation Aid is owed to schools statewide.

Senator Jackson said: “Although it’s nice to finally hear about equitable funding of public education from Governor Cuomo, his paltry \$338 million in Foundation Aid is an insult to our children. Whatever plan he may craft to address funding disparities within districts does not address the now over \$4 billion that has been owed to struggling schools statewide for decades as a result of the state's failure to uphold its legal obligation. The Campaign for Fiscal Equity will not be erased.”

Particularly troubling in the Governor’s State of the State address was his evasion of the statewide funding issue by relying on a politically-motivated study by former advisor Jim Malatras that places the blame on school districts for spending disparate amounts on individual schools. In so doing, the Governor puts up smoke and mirrors around the staggering poverty of districts like Buffalo by comparing relatively better off but still underfunded schools with the worst funded.

Many students are still being denied the “sound, basic education” that is their constitutional right. We see this lack in school libraries without librarians, school counselors who must serve 800 students, and students denied access to art and music and courses that will prepare them for college.

In an unprecedented move, the Governor devoted two pages of his budget briefing booklet to attacking Foundation Aid and the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. He asserts his support for the position of conservative Republican Governor George Pataki on school funding. He also

misrepresents the CFE court order. The Court order set a minimum that was due to schools in New York City, but deferred to the Governor and the legislature to provide a resolution that was designed to provide students the constitutionally guaranteed “sound, basic education.” Governor Spitzer and the legislature enacted the Foundation Aid formula as a statewide solution in 2007. At the time, Governor Spitzer and the leadership of both houses of the legislature were explicitly clear that the Foundation Aid formula was the statewide solution to CFE. When Andrew Cuomo was running for Governor in 2010, he recognized this fact and campaigned in support of CFE saying, “The state is supposed to equalize or come close to equalizing with its funding. That’s the CFE lawsuit that the state is yet to fully fund.”

“The Foundation Aid formula must be fulfilled. My colleagues in the Senate and I will continue fighting until our schools are given the \$4.1 billion they are owed to ensure a quality education for all New York children. I intend to see first-hand the conditions in which our children are learning statewide through a fact-finding tour my office will be putting together, and I encourage my colleagues in the Senate and Assembly to join me,” Senator Jackson concluded.

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