



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Senator Hinchey Secures First-Time State Funding to Launch Full-Day 4-Year-Old Pre-K in Greene County, Meets Student Beneficiaries at Catskill Elementary

MICHELLE HINCHEY September 21, 2021

| ISSUE: **PRE-K FUNDING, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, 2021-2022 STATE BUDGET**



CATSKILL, NY – State Senator Michelle Hinchey today joined school officials and teachers at Catskill Elementary to welcome students back for the 2021-22 academic year, including 36 pre-K students who now have access to full-day four-year-old pre-K thanks to a historic investment of \$203,360 in funding secured by Hinchey in the 2021-2022 State Budget.

Earlier this year, Hinchey and her colleagues approved an unprecedented investment of \$105 million to expand pre-K programs statewide, providing first-time funding to school districts that don't currently receive state aid for full-day pre-K. Greene County has received more than \$690,000 and the ability to create 105 new slots because of Hinchey's advocacy during the 2021-22 budget process.

Also included within the 46th Senate District is funding for pre-K slots in the following Greene County school districts: Cairo-Durham Central School District received \$195,520 to create 26 full-day pre-K slots; Coxsackie-Athens Central School District received \$120,164 to create 22 full-day pre-K slots, and Greenville Central School District received \$171,626 to create 26 full-day pre-K slots.

"Early childhood education is a fundamental building block that gives children the strong foundation they need to succeed in school and throughout their lives. We need to start thinking of pre-K as essential infrastructure in our rural and upstate communities — it's not only a core pillar of a child's development but a critical resource for working parents and a healthy local economy," **said Senator Michelle Hinchey.** "I represent four school districts in Greene County that have never had the financial means to offer full-day four-year-old pre-K until this school year, and that's because of the historic levels of state funding we secured to make that a reality for children and families. I was proud to fight for this transformative investment and am thrilled to be able to witness the young students entering pre-K classrooms for the first time here in Catskill and across our Greene County school system. I'll continue to do everything I can to push for the funding our local schools need and deserve."

Dr. Ronel Cook, Superintendent of Schools, Catskill Central School District, said, "I am very grateful for Senator Hinchey's advocacy for Universal Pre-Kindergarten funding. The monies

have been used to establish a full-day Pre-Kindergarten program with a strong emphasis on early literacy and early numeracy. Better prepared Pre-Kindergarten students will help to advance and accelerate teaching and learning district-wide."

John Rivers, Principal of Catskill Elementary School, said, "There are several benefits of a full-day UPK program at Catskill Elementary School. Full-day UPK students receive a 'Jumpstart' into the Catskill Elementary School's routines and procedures, as well gain familiarity to the School's curriculum, building configuration, and the friendly faces at CES. When we were a ½ day program, families had a difficult time with day care. Oftentimes transportation was a challenge that families were faced with. By offering a full day program families are less restricted by the school schedule allowing families to coordinate school, work and daycare."

Catskill Teachers Association President Tammi Kellenbenz said, "Our union is pleased that our district leaders supported the need for full-day Pre-K programs and retained an additional teacher. Our Pre-K teachers are fully qualified and thoroughly invested in providing the best educational experiences to ensure the success of our youngest Catskill learners."

Senator Hinchey represents six school districts in Greene County, which include Cairo-Durham, Catskill Central, Coxsackie-Athens, Greenville, Hunter-Tannersville, and Windham-Ashland-Jewett. To support the needs of students as they transition back to the classroom, Greene County school districts have received over \$65 million in total state-funded School Aid this year — a 9.59% increase over last year.

The School Aid Hinchey secured for the Catskill Central School District has allowed the district to expand social-emotional support for students, address learning loss, fund before and afterschool programming, direct more resources toward summer school enrichment

initiatives, and technological upgrades. The additional aid has also enabled Catskill to hire four full-time school counselors, two posted at the Elementary school, one at Catskill Middle School, and the fourth at Catskill High School.

The district-by-district breakdown for this year's increase in School Aid is as follows:

- Cairo-Durham Central School District: \$16,289,074 (8.47% increase)
- Catskill Central School District: \$18,868,609 (9.24% increase)
- Cossackie-Athens Central School District: \$12,148,676 (11.82% increase)
- Greenville Central School District: \$14,218,311 (9.49% increase)
- Hunter-Tannersville Central School District: \$2,632,453 (9.44% increase)
- Windham-Ashland-Jewett Central School District: \$1,641,328 (9.78% increase)

###