



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

# Harckham, Levenberg and School Officials from Ossining and Peekskill Announce Historic Education Investments in FY2024 State Budget

PETE HARCKHAM May 11, 2023

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Ossining, NY - New York State Senator Pete Harckham, Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg, Ossining Schools Superintendent Dr. Raymond Sanchez and Peekskill Schools Superintendent Dr. David Mauricio shared details of the historic FY2024 state budget investments in public education at a press conference today here at Roosevelt School.

Joining the state legislators and school superintendents at the event were respective school board members from the two school districts, educators, union officials, teachers, advocates and students from the Ossining school district.

To see a video of the press conference, click [here](#).

Included in the FY2024 Budget is a record \$34.5 billion in total School Aid for school year 2024, an increase of \$3 billion from last year and the highest level of State aid ever. Additionally, the budget includes \$24 billion in Foundation Aid, an increase of \$2.6 billion from last year.

The press conference was held in Ossining, in conjunction with the Ossining and Peekskill school districts, because these two communities have been shortchanged when it comes to state education funding. But the full funding of Foundation Aid for school districts statewide, a process initiated 20 years ago and finally realized in the new budget, will provide resources to boost achievement for all students across different school districts.

“The number one priority for the State Legislature over the past several years has been to fully fund education, and this now has been achieved in the new state budget,” said Harckham. “For too long, there has been an equity problem in New York, with the quality of education being afforded to our children being dependent on the zip code in which they lived. That means students in underfunded schools, like here in Ossining and in Peekskill, have been given less of everything to help them succeed in the classroom.”

Added Harckham, “Today, I can proudly state that we have delivered a record investment in education that will strengthen our communities immeasurably in the years to come. With the state now fully funding its obligation regarding Foundation Aid following a three-year phase-in, we will offset a funding gap that the Ossining and Peekskill districts have had to shoulder while also taking pressure off over-taxed property owners.”

“This budget is a huge victory for our communities,” said Levenberg. “It is so exciting to tour the schools in my district and see what they have done and will be able to do with additional state funding. I have been fighting for fully funded Foundation Aid since I was an Ossining school board member, and I am so immensely proud to be able to bring this money here now as an Assemblywoman. I want to thank the Ossining for Fair Funding group and so many others who have worked over the years to focus attention on this issue and bring us to this point.”

In the 40th Senate District, there are 18 school districts, including the Peekskill City School District and Ossining School District. For those 18 districts there is \$541 million of school aid in the FY2024 State

Budget, an increase of \$86.1 million in funding. These districts, on average, saw an 18.9% increase in funding. Foundation Aid for these districts: \$358.1 million in Foundation Aid.

For the Ossining Union Free School District, the new state budget includes \$53.2 million in school aid, an increase of \$11.3 million, or 27.2%. Ossining Foundation Aid is \$37.1 million, an increase of \$12.1 million, or 48.4%.

**Ossining Schools Superintendent Raymond Sanchez** said, “We are furthering our journey together with a huge and tremendous step forward to ensure equity for all students, thanks to the full Foundation Aid funding in this budget. But this is not about dollar amounts solely; it’s about opportunity. Behind every number there is an individual child with a story that needs to be understood, and it is incumbent upon us that we adapt to the ever-changing needs of our students and our families.”

For the Peekskill City School District, the new state budget includes \$65.9 million in school aid, an increase of \$9.9 million from last year, or 17.8%. Peekskill Foundation Aid is \$51.4 million, an increase of \$10.2 million, or 24.9%.

**Peekskill Schools Superintendent Dr. Mauricio** said, “For years, we stood together to demand that New York State implement fair and equitable funding for our children. Everyone worked together to address the needs of our scholars, and to help in closing the opportunity gap through the full funding of Foundation Aid. On behalf of our children, I thank the parents, advocates and the elected officials who successfully brought this plan to fruition. The impact of this funding is monumental for the Peekskill City School District in supporting our vision and in keeping ‘Peekskill’s Promise’ to our children.”

Regarding Universal Pre-K, 13 school districts in the 40th Senate District will now be able to jumpstart their programs, as the new budget includes \$19.6 million of funding for 758 new slots for a total of 3,020 slots. (Several districts already have UPK programs in place.)

**Ossining Teachers Association President Vanessa Vaccaro** said, “This is what we have spent years advocating for. We are thrilled to see this promise to students and educators be finally fulfilled. Greater funding is needed now more than ever before to ensure our schools are safe, welcoming environments to learn, work and grow in for generations to come.”

**Peekskill Faculty Association President Tim Murphy** said, “This unprecedented investment in public education is a sigh of relief for Peekskill students, educators and the school community, as we continue grappling with the effects of the pandemic and decades of underfunding. With this funding, we will be better equipped to address things like increasing social-emotional support for students and educators; adding more special education teachers; bolstering ENL programs; implementing restorative justice

practices; and reducing class sizes.”

**Senator Shelley B. Mayer, chair of the Senate Education Committee**, was unable to attend the press conference, but issued the following statement: “I am proud of the historic investments New York State is making in this year’s state budget for our public schools. From finally fully funding foundation aid to investing \$135 million to expand access to school breakfast and lunch for nearly 300,000 students to continuing to expand full-day Pre-K to districts outside New York City, this year’s budget will help students learn, grow, and thrive. I thank Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for her leadership, and Senator Pete Harckham for his advocacy and support of public education.”