

TESTIMONY

**Joint Legislative Hearing of the
ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

&

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

On

Executive Budget Proposals for Education

SFY 2019-2020



Wednesday, February 6, 2019

THE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

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Good afternoon, Assembly member Weinstein, Senator Krueger, Assembly member Benedetto, Senator Mayer, Senator Liu and your honorable colleagues. It's a pleasure to be with you again today.

My name is Mark Cannizzaro and I am the President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). CSA is the labor union representing 6,100 active and 10,000 retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Education Administrators and Supervisors working in New York City public schools and five charter schools. CSA is also the collective bargaining unit for 200 Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors who work in city-subsidized Early Childhood Education Centers.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the Executive Budget for State Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

School Aid & Foundation Aid – CSA believes the Executive Budget proposals fail to support school aid adequately. The Executive Budget proposes to increase school aid increase by \$747 million for SFY 2019-2020. Foundation Aid would increase by only \$338 million. That is less than half the \$2.1 billion increase that the State Board of Regents recommended, and far short of the \$2.2 billion state aid increase the Educational Conference Board has called for.

We also believe the State must commit to fully funding the Foundation Aid formula. In 2007, you enacted the Foundation Aid formula to support all school districts across New York State, and most importantly low-wealth school districts. The time has come to fulfill Foundation Aid's promise.

New York is now \$4.0 billion behind the full phase-in of Foundation Aid. We ask your support to fund Foundation Aid fully within three years. We also respectfully request that any increase in Foundation Aid for New York City schools be tied to a directive that these funds are for the sole purpose of increasing *Fair Student Funding* percentages for schools that are currently operating below 100% of the *Fair Student Funding* formula.

School Leader Professional Development —The role and work of instructional leaders has become even more crucial in recent years as policymakers have focused on supporting student achievement and eliminating college and career readiness gaps among our youth. Great schools begin with great leaders.

To ensure that school leaders successfully manage and meet ongoing challenges as well as succeed as instructional leaders, New York State must provide our Principal and Assistant Principals with access to ongoing professional development. The research-based literature related to effective schools and student achievement has long acknowledged the critical role of Principals in providing school leadership that will shape a highly complex human organization into a cohesive and collaborative community of learners.

A number of years ago, CSA established the *Executive Leadership Institute (ELI)*¹, a not-for-profit organization designed to deliver practical, relevant and essential professional development for today's school leaders.

¹ <http://www.csa-nyc.org/eli/overview/>

ELI provides standards-based, results-driven leadership training to help school leaders successfully fulfill their responsibilities as instructional leaders. We need to invest in more of this kind of high-level training and support. ELI's programs give school leaders the tools they need to create true learning communities.

We are grateful for the Legislature's support of ELI in the FY 2019-2020 state budget. This \$475,000 appropriation has sustained our work to provide much needed professional development services to school leaders working in New York City public schools. ELI mentors more than 200 school leaders on a one to one basis for a year, and offers hundreds of workshops during the school year and summer institutes, all free of charge to public school leaders.

ELI works with other professional organizations to provide professional development for Long Island and Upstate school administrators too. With your help and support, ELI's programs can grow, providing standards-based, high quality and results-driven leadership training to help school administrators in New York City.

We ask for your continued support of this important work. CSA respectfully requests a ~~\$575,000~~ grant for 2019 to continue and expand professional development services. With the Legislature's support, ELI plans to *expand* programming in 2019 to include training required under the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), creating LGBTQ-friendly school environments, and on the impact of social emotional intelligence in our schools.

Community Schools —CSA supports the Executive Budget proposal of \$250 million for community schools, \$50 million above last year's level. The success of Community Schools – that have transformed school buildings into community hubs to deliver academic, health, mental health, nutrition and counseling services to students and their families – has been nothing short of remarkable. These are smart investments proven to improve student success and achievement.

Community Schools work. There are now 215 Community Schools in New York City, the largest Community School system in the nation. Community schools confront the problems faced by most struggling schools – problems that are largely societal issues outside the school building. Students must come to school ready to learn - and this can only happen if we recognize the limitations many schoolchildren unfortunately face every day. Addressing issues relating to poverty, homelessness, poor home environment, medical/dental issues, nutrition and many other issues, form the basis for new services provided at a Community School. We are confident that these schools will continue to show and sustain concrete results, and benefit students significantly.

Mayoral Control - CSA supports the continuation of mayoral control as proposed in the Executive Budget. We do believe that mayoral control has been successful in ensuring New York City's local and municipal involvement in our schools. In contrast to the days before mayoral control, the current system is much more sensitive to the needs of students, families and schools throughout the City.

However, based on our observations since mayoral control was first enacted in 2002, we do believe that refinements to the current law could further improve the system of mayoral control.

Military/Veteran Support in NYC Public Schools – CSA has commenced an initiative to support children of the new generation of combat veterans and active military service members who live in New York City. These veterans and active military service members are entitled to benefits for both themselves and their families, of which they are not always aware. CSA believes that every public school in New York City have at least one designated veterans/active military liaison trained on veterans/military benefits and resources.

Conversion Charter Schools - CSA represents a number of unionized, conversion charter schools. CSA recommends the creation of a new category of support: *Conversion Charter School Supplemental Aid*. Our unionized conversion charter schools continue to bear “legacy” costs that date from pre-conversion. Our charter school members report that pension and health insurance costs have risen dramatically in recent years, and can now comprise 12% to 22% of the entire operating budget for each school. These costs are not covered under the regular charter school funding process, and financial relief is urgently needed.

Conclusion - Our students deserve the best; we must provide them with the programs, services and supports necessary to prepare them for not only college and careers, but also for life.

New York State will be successful in educating our students only when we take the time to discuss, plan, implement and provide the necessary resources to our students. During the upcoming budget negotiations, we urge the Legislature to continue to advocate for students, teachers and school leaders as you always have.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

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