



# THE 4201 SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

Testimony Presented to  
Fiscal Committees of the New York State Legislature  
Hearing on the 2024 - 2025 Executive Budget

February 1, 2024

Albany, New York

---

Cleary School for the Deaf (Nesconset)  
Lavelle School for the Blind (Bronx)  
New York Institute for Special Education (Bronx)  
New York School for the Deaf (White Plains)  
St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf (Brooklyn)  
St. Mary's School for the Deaf (Buffalo)

Henry Viscardi School (Albertson)  
Lexington School for the Deaf (Queens)  
Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf (Mill Neck)  
Rochester School for the Deaf (Rochester)  
St. Joseph's School for the Deaf (Bronx)

Good afternoon, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Krueger, Assemblymember Benedetto, Senator Mayer, and your honorable colleagues. My name is Tim Kelly, Superintendent of St. Mary's School for the Deaf in Buffalo. I serve as co-chair of the 4201 Schools Association. It is a pleasure to be with you today, and we are grateful for your continued support and friendship over the years.

The Association represents eleven (11) not-for-profit state-supported schools serving children who are deaf, blind, or severely physically disabled throughout New York State. In recent years, many of the children we now serve also have additional disabilities – either physical or in cognition – and several of schools now have students and families who have recently arrived in the United States as asylum seekers. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the 2025 Executive Budget as it relates to our students and schools.

We would first like to thank the Assembly and Senate for your longstanding support of our students and schools. Your work to restore and increase state support to our schools last year has been impactful for each of our schools around the State. We are truly grateful.

For the 2025 State Budget, we ask your support for the following priorities:

**State Support** - Like every other any school, we need consistent, stable, and reliable funding to meet our students' needs. We request the Legislature's support for the following:

1. **Growth** – We ask that our schools receive funding increases commensurate with aid increases provided to public schools and other special education schools.
2. **Mental Health** – The Executive Budget includes several initiatives to meet the mental health needs of children (school-based health centers, school mental health programs, and mental health support grants). Our schools and students bear the same mental health challenges as other schools. Making our schools eligible for whatever new mental health supports for children that might be approved would be a great benefit.

**Capital Assistance** - The Executive Budget also re-appropriates the \$30 million

capital grant program appropriated for a second round of health and safety projects.

We appreciate and need this support as well. Our schools were established decades ago in communities around the State by philanthropic organizations, and most of our school buildings are now quite old. Our facilities are aging, and the needs of our students are changing.

**Fund Balance** - We ask the Legislature to give our schools authority to retain a small fund balance, like all other public and private schools in New York.

It's important to allow our schools to prepare financially for variances or other contingencies (emergencies, planning for or adapting to student needs throughout the school year). The pandemic has highlighted the need to give school leaders tools to adapt quickly maintaining fiscal stewardship of our operations.

*And according to the State Comptroller, "The practice of planning ahead and systematically saving for capital acquisitions and other contingencies is considered prudent management."*

**Support Salary Growth & Workforce Retention** - Our schools' staff members are specially trained and certified to work with children who are deaf, blind, or severely physically disabled. But salaries for our specially qualified staff lag those in public schools.

We propose a new initiative to increase salaries for our teachers and professional staff:

- \$30 million program over three years to incrementally increase salaries to better compete with public school districts.

We are grateful for the *NYS Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, & Asian Legislative Caucus's* support of this initiative in their annual "The People's Budget" package issued in December.

**Interagency Coordinating Council on Services to Persons who are Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing** - We do also want to highlight the "re-establishment" of the "Interagency Coordinating Council on Services to Persons

who are Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing” announced by Governor Hochul on January 17. We ask for your engagement in an announced objective of the Council to:

*“Evaluat[e] how 4201 schools (which serve New York’s blind, deaf and severely physically disabled) are funded, and making recommendations on the best allocation of funds for children with additional disabilities, including those having complex medical needs, within the 4201 school system.”*

This initiative may be important to the future of our schools, and we believe the Council’s recommendations should be developed in partnership with the Legislature.

---

The 4201 Schools are proud to partner with New York State in ensuring high quality educational opportunity to students with low incidence disabilities. We take very seriously our responsibility to provide each of our students with a safe and healthy environment in which to grow and succeed. We are truly grateful for the state support that sustains our schools and the students we serve.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy M. Kelly  
Co-Chair, 4201 Schools Association  
Superintendent, St. Mary’s School for the Deaf



## The 4201 Schools Association

*Advocating for New York State's Blind, Deaf  
and Severely Physically Disabled Children*

For more than 200 years, the people of New York State have relied on the skills and expertise of the 4201 Schools to provide educational services to children who are deaf, blind and severely physically disabled. The Association represents 11 member schools across New York.

**Under Section 4201 of the Education Law,** the State has designated certain private non-profit schools to serve the special education needs of deaf, blind, physically disabled students or students with multiple disabilities. Students come to 4201 Schools upon application by their parents or school districts, and with the approval of the State Education Commissioner.

The leaders, teachers, counselors, therapists and all other support staff at each school are specialists in their field, and serve as a resource for policy makers, families, communities, and each other to encourage that best practices are utilized in the education of New York State students with low incidence disabilities. There are no charges or fees to parents for educational costs, transportation, room or board at 4201 schools. Our students benefit from the academic, life skills, vocational, and other specially designed programs available at our schools. Students also take part in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. 4201 Schools Association members are engaged in building opportunities for children by offering high-quality programs and through public awareness advocacy.

### The 4201 Schools Association: Who We Are

- Cleary School for the Deaf (Suffolk Co.)
- Henry Viscardi School (Nassau Co.)
- Lavelle School for the Blind (Bronx)
- Lexington School for the Deaf (Queens)
- Mill Neck School for the Deaf (Nassau Co.)
- New York Institute for Special Education (Bronx)
- New York School for the Deaf (Westchester Co.)
- Rochester School for the Deaf (Monroe Co.)
- St. Joseph's School for the Deaf (Bronx)
- St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf (Brooklyn)
- St. Mary's School for the Deaf (Erie Co.)



[www.4201schools.org](http://www.4201schools.org)



[@4201Schools](https://twitter.com/4201Schools)



[@4201SchoolsAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/4201SchoolsAssociation)