



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Stewart-Cousins, Mayer and Harckham Herald 2021-2022 State Budget's Historic Investment in Education

PETE HARCKHAM April 14, 2021

| ISSUE: **2021-2022 STATE BUDGET, EQUITABLE SCHOOL FUNDING, EDUCATION FOUNDATION AID**



Peekskill, NY – New York State Senator Pete Harckham, along with State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senator Shelley B. Mayer (chair of the Senate Committee on Education) and other officials from Peekskill and Ossining, shared details of the 2021-2022 State Budget's historic investment in education at a press conference held here at the Peekskill City School District's central office.

Joining the three state senators at the press conference were Assemblywoman Sandra Galef and Peekskill Deputy Mayor Vivian McKenzie, plus Peekskill Schools Superintendent Dr. David Mauricio, Ossining Schools Superintendent Dr. Raymond Sanchez and other school officials and supporters.

“When I joined the Senate Democratic Majority in 2019, to a person, our number one priority was fully funding education,” said Sen. Harckham. “Every child in the state, regardless of the zip code in which they live, should receive a high-quality education. In addition, the state should fully fund its obligation regarding Foundation Aid to take the pressure off over-taxed property owners. This year, the Senate’s Democratic Majority stood up for students in the newly enacted budget—and delivered an investment in education that will strengthen our communities immeasurably.”

Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins said, “Our students, parents, educators, and unions shouldn’t have had to become lobbyists for Foundation Aid to deliver the fiscal equity that our schools need and deserve. The Senate Majority fought to pass a budget with a commitment to fully fund foundation aid so funding goes where it is needed most. We also delivered transformational increases in education funding so federal dollars were not in place of State education funding. Thank you to my colleagues and everyone who advocated for these victories.”

“I am so pleased to join my colleague Senator Harckham and our Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and so many in the school community as we recognize the tremendous benefits this budget provides for our children,” said Senator Mayer. “For years, advocates, including parents, teachers, and school administrators, fought for the necessary resources to meet the needs of public schools and our children. Today, with the leadership of Majority Leader Senator Stewart-Cousins and our Assembly colleagues, we have succeeded in moving New York State to meet its constitutional obligation to fund its public schools based

on need. This is a fantastic achievement and much credit is due to the persistence of the advocates who know all children are entitled to a quality education, irrespective of their zip code.”

“It is about time we fully funded Foundation Aid, as we have been advocating for that to be part of our state budget for years,” said Assemblywoman Galef. “Peekskill and Ossining schools in my district will be beneficiaries of this important aid coming from Albany. This is a great day for our children—we are bringing equity to our educational system at last.”

Education spending the 2021-2022 State Budget totals \$29.6 billion—an increase of \$3.1 billion from last year. There is \$19.8 billion in Foundation Aid—an increase of \$1.4 billion from last year.

In the 40th Senate District (SD40), which Sen. Harckham represents, there are 19 school districts, including the Peekskill City School District and Ossining School District. Those 19 districts will receive \$378 million of school aid in the 2021-2022 State Budget—an increase of \$43.1 million in funding. These districts, on average, saw an 11.4% increase in funding.

Meanwhile, Foundation Aid for the SD40 districts is \$218.8 million in Foundation Aid, an increase of \$24.3 million from last year. Peekskill is receiving \$49.2 million in school aid—an increase of \$5.3 million from last year, or 12.12%. Peekskill Foundation Aid in the new budget is \$35.4 million—an increase of \$2.9 million, or 9%. Ossining is receiving \$32.8 million in school aid—an increase of \$5.8 million from last year, or 21.5%. Ossining Foundation Aid in the new budget is \$18.2 million—an increase of \$3.8 million, or 26.9%.

“When I think about what this means for our schools moving forward, it’s a critical game changer,” said Dr. Mauricio. “I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who played a role in making this funding a reality. For years, parents, students, educators, school

board members, advocacy organizations and locally elected officials have stood together to demand that New York State do what was fair and equitable for our children. This success is the result of never giving up on that advocacy work. This is the support our children deserve, and will help assist in closing the equity gap. It is how the Peekskill Schools will be able to continue keeping our promise to our students and families.”

Dr. Sanchez thanked the state legislators for their ardent support for education and called them “equity warriors,” adding, “What this funding has provided us with is a huge and tremendous step forward to ensure equity for all students...But this is not about numbers solely. Behind every number there is an individual child with a story that needs to be understood, and it incumbent upon us that we adapt to the ever-changing needs of our students and our families. That’s what we do.”

Margery Rossi, co-chair of the Peekskill City School District Parent-Teacher Organization, said, “Months ago, it seemed impossible that we’d be standing here today, celebrating that our school district would be receiving more equitable funding from our state budget, but here we are. And so today, I not only express my joy, I am grateful for unexpected successes, and I salute every person who worked to make this happen.”