



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## **Addabbo: Senate Education Committee on right path with hearing to review spending of budget increases**

Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.

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On Tuesday, October 5, State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. joined his fellow colleagues on the Senate Standing Committee on Education for a joint public hearing to review how school districts are spending Foundation Aid increases and funds from the federal government's American Rescue Plan Act (ARP).

The adopted 2021-22 Enacted Budget includes a historic commitment to public education by increasing Foundation Aid by \$1.4 billion, a bump of 7.6%, and committing to full Foundation Aid funding over the next two years. Additionally, there is \$12 billion in federal COVID funding, which was approved to pass directly to school districts, including \$3.85 billion in the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and \$8.2 billion in the ARP.

According to Chapter 56 of the laws of 2021, a school district receiving a Foundation Aid increase of more than 10% or \$10 million is required to adopt a plan on how these funds will be used. This committee meeting was established to see how the Department of Education is allocating those funds.

“This is a historic investment into our public education system across the state of New York. In addition to securing billions of dollars for education, we need to make sure that these funds are being allocated properly,” Addabbo said. “This is a large sum of money, and it is imperative that the money is going to programs and school districts that need it the most.”

NYC Department of Education (DOE) Chancellor Meisha Porter noted that the Fiscal Year 2022 Adopted Budget for the DOE is \$37.8 billion, which will be used for investments for the entire school system that will benefit students now and in the future.

Through the Foundation Aid funding, DOE is able to provide 100% Fair Student Funding (FSF) to all schools. This will affect over 700,000 students in more than 1,000 schools to ensure that schools can support their families and staff.

Chancellor Porter noted that safety is the DOE’s top priority, and has required all DOE employees provide proof that they have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. All schools are also following multi-layered safety protocols including mandatory masking inside buildings, safe ventilation, physical distancing, and month-long supplies of PPE in every school.

“I am pleased to see that our schools are taking the steps needed to keep students, faculty and staff safe during the pandemic,” Addabbo said. “Over the last school year we saw just how important in-school learning is, and it is vital that we do everything in our power to make sure that everyone is safe inside our schools so we do not have to go back to the virtual learning model.”

Another way DOE is investing in the health of students is through \$80 million in funding for the mental health and well-being of students, by adding over 600 new social workers, school psychologists and family support workers in schools.

Within the DOE's Academic Recovery Plan, there is \$22 million dedicated to expanding the availability of preschool special education classes, as well as \$378 million for Universal 3-K for All so every family in NYC can access a 3-K seat by September 2023.

The DOE is also committed to growing their Community School strategy with the goal of having Community Schools in every district by the 2022-2023 school year. This funding will create 100 additional sites, for a total of 406 Community Schools. The budget will allow DOE to expand the availability of restorative justice programs in middle and high schools that have already successfully contributed to a 66% decrease in school suspensions.

The closing of schools due to the pandemic highlighted the inequities in our schools when it comes to technology. In 2021 it is essential for a student to have access to technology. This budget increase will allow for more help desk support, the continuation of LTE services for the more than 500,000 devices purchased for students in response to the pandemic, and allow DOE to build out their digital learning hub.

Addabbo questioned the Chancellor as to whether there are DOE measures in place to evaluate the success of programs funded with the newly allocated budget monies. The Senator was informed that an analysis and evaluation of such funding would be completed before the end of the year.

"Our main focus now needs to be watching how these programs move along and how helpful they are to students and teachers alike. By monitoring and funding the programs that are successful, we can continue to best serve our students," Addabbo added. "As a father of two girls in the public school system, I know how important it is to have schools operating at their full potential. I will work with my colleagues on the Education Committee to ensure that the funding for our schools is being used in the most productive way."