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# TESTIMONY

Joint Legislative Hearing of the

NEW YORK STATE

ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

&

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

On

Executive Budget Proposals for Education

SFY 2020-2021



Tuesday, February 11, 2020

**THE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS**

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Good afternoon, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Krueger, Assemblymember 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 in-service and 10,500 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 2020-2021.

**School Aid & Foundation Aid** – CSA believes the Executive Budget proposal fails to provide sufficient support to schools and their students. CSA continues to advocate for increasing the currently inadequate resources allocated for the purposes of keeping our schools safe havens of learning. Fully funding our schools should not be an aspiration, but rather a starting point.

The Executive Budget proposes to increase Foundation Aid by \$504 million for SFY 2020-2021. That's just bit more than a quarter of the \$2 billion increase that the State Board of Regents recommended, and far short of the \$2.1 billion state aid increase the Educational Conference Board has called for. We 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. However, we 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.

Finally, CSA does not support the proposal to merge some expense-based aids into Foundation Aid.

**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)*<sup>1</sup>, a not-for-profit organization designed to deliver practical, relevant and essential professional development for today's school leaders. 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.

We ask for your continued support of this important work. CSA respectfully requests a \$575,000 grant for 2020-2021 to continue and expand professional development services [A \$100,000 increase]. With the Legislature's support, ELI has expanded 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.

Through ELI, CSA plans to expand our *Advanced Leadership Program for Assistant Principals (ALPAP)*. This is vitally important, as the Department of Education is anticipating a high turnover in school leadership in the next 18

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

months. A new study<sup>2</sup> by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) finds that high-poverty schools are hit hardest by principal churn. ALPAP will help foster a new cohort of strong, inspired and dynamic leaders to help our youth succeed.

**School Safety & Discipline** – The first and most important priority of a school leader is to protect the health, safety and welfare of our students while maintaining a culture that is conducive to learning and respectful to all.

In a recent survey of more than 2,300 school leaders in New York City, only 20% of principals were satisfied with the fiscal resources allocated to their schools to provide a safe and appropriate educational experience for their students. This is one of many responses to our survey and one that requires immediate attention.

Our survey also tells us that recent changes to the discipline code have had a detrimental effect on school climate. Our members say safety is not taken seriously enough by the DOE, and that lenient codes of discipline lead to disorder, chaos, and difficulty for students who are trying to do the right thing.

To be clear, CSA fully supports the philosophical shift in intervention responses. School leaders fully recognize the folly of the old zero tolerance policy and its disproportionate impact on students of color and students with disabilities. We champion restorative justice and de-escalation techniques, and support the *Positive Learning Collaborative* initiative. However, our members feel strongly that our system is faltering because the manner in

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<sup>2</sup> <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/press-release/new-research-project-looks-causes-and-impacts-principal-turnover-and-solutions>

which the DOE has chosen to implement these promising practices has eroded their discretion and tied their hands. In many schools, misconduct is on the rise, leading some students to believe that there are little or no consequences for disruptive, openly defiant, threatening and even violent behavior.

There are 111 schools in New York City without an assistant principal and these schools face serious safety concerns as a result. When principals of these schools are taken out of the building by the Department of Education, there is no licensed administrator present and responsible to oversee the protocols and procedures to keep students safe in an emergency. Further, many more schools deal with assistant principal understaffing, often because a principal's request to hire is rejected without cause or explanation. We believe that staffing schools in this manner is simply negligent.

**Charter Schools** - CSA does not support the 2020-2021 Executive Budget proposals to re-issue charters which have been surrendered, revoked or terminated.

**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.

**Schools as Polling Sites** - CSA fully recognizes the importance of new early voting initiatives and encourages greater voter turnout for a healthy democracy. When schools serve as early voting sites, however, the necessary procedures increase security risks and present operational challenges that have been highly disruptive to the educational process.

CSA supports legislation to give school districts the authority to decline a school building's designation as a polling location as well as legislation to prohibit the use of schools as early voting sites.

**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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