

KEVIN S. PARKER
SENATOR, 21ST DISTRICT

COMMITTEES

CODES

COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& SMALL BUSINESS

ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

FINANCE

HIGHER EDUCATION

INSURANCE

RULES

NEW AMERICAN TASK FORCE



THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

ALBANY OFFICE:
ROOM 412
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
PHONE: 518-459-2580
FAX: 518-426-6843

DISTRICT OFFICE:
1300 FLATBUSH AVENUE
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11210
PHONE 718-629-6401
FAX 718-629-6420

e-mail:
parker@nysenate.gov

March 8, 2013

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor
State of New York
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Sheldon Silver
Speaker
New York State Assembly
932 Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable Dean Skelos
Co-Temporary President
New York State Senate
330 The Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Jeff Klein
Co-Temporary President
New York State Senate
913 Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Governor Cuomo, Speaker Silver, President Skelos, and President Klein:

We write to draw your attention to the crisis which is unfolding in our public schools across the state. New York's commitment to expanding educational opportunity and equity was borne out in 2007 with the statewide settlement of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. At that time the state enacted a new foundation aid formula and a commitment to provide \$5.5 billion in foundation aid fairly and equitably distributed over four years. This commitment was made with the objective of promoting equity through increasing opportunity, not through leveling down or undercutting the quality of schools in any part of the state.

For two years these increases were provided and schools made significant improvements in the form of expanded college preparatory curriculum, tutoring and remedial programs, career and technical education, programs for English language learners, literacy initiatives, smaller class sizes and more. The state's investment in these programs was very beneficial for students.

However, since that time, the state of affairs in New York schools has reversed course. Schools absorbed over \$2.7 billion in classroom cuts in 2010 and 2011. Last year, the state provided a 4% increase in total school aid of which only \$500 million went to classroom operating aid via either the foundation formula or the Gap Elimination Adjustment restorations.

The 4% increase was not adequate to prevent further classroom cuts, much less restore the many beneficial programs that schools have cut over the past four years. This year's proposed 4.4% increase will again be inadequate to prevent more classroom cuts. It is critical that we not only distribute those funds fairly but add additional funding of at least \$350 million.

Over 35,000 teachers, librarians, guidance counselors and other educators have been cut from our schools. As a result large numbers of schools have made cuts to art, music, Advanced Placement and honors courses, career and technical education, foreign languages, summer school, and extra help for students who fall behind. Eleven percent of districts have reduced or eliminated pre-kindergarten and some districts have even cut full-day kindergarten to half-day with more districts considering this option.

These cuts have hurt all schools whether in large cities, small cities, suburbs or rural communities. These cuts hurt students today and will hurt New York's economy tomorrow.

Simultaneously schools have made considerable cuts to administration, frozen or reduced pay for superintendents, negotiated concessions from their local unions, found cost savings through shared services, spent down their reserve funds, and taken other steps to reduce the impact on the classrooms. Local school districts face increased demands as a result of higher standards and new requirements that are pursuant to Race to the Top, the Common Core Curriculum and the new teacher evaluation system. These reforms, which are designed to improve student outcomes, all have a price tag that has not been matched by new funding.

The Commissioner of Education has repeatedly warned that our schools face "educational insolvency" which means they will be unable to provide the educational programming students need to succeed in college or even to meet state and federal standards for graduation. Our schools also face fiscal insolvency which means they will be unable to ensure that some of their financial obligations are paid.

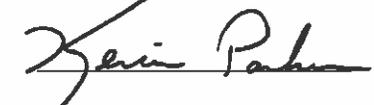
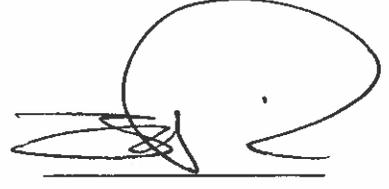
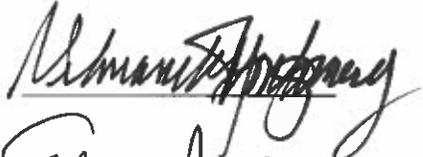
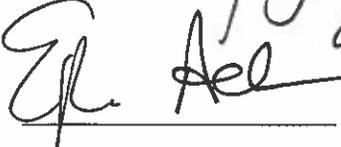
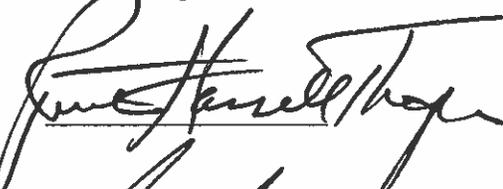
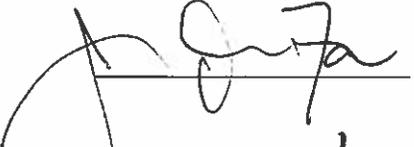
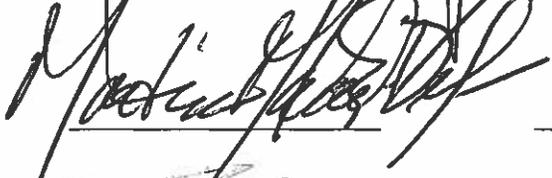
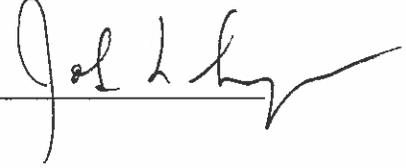
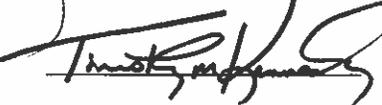
We simply cannot continue to allow our schools to face both educational and fiscal insolvency. It is for these reasons that we write you today to respectfully request that the enacted state budget includes the following priorities:

- Distribute the Fiscal Stabilization Funds through an equitable formula – either the foundation formula or the Gap Elimination Adjustment restoration formula contained in the Executive Budget proposal—it is imperative that these funds become base school aid;
- Go beyond that by adding \$350 million in additional aid to be distributed through one of these two formulas that goes into base school aid;
- Update the foundation formula to recognize changes in student demographics and district capacity;

- Ensure that our students do not suffer any loss of resources as a result of the failure of adults to reach agreements regarding the Annual Professional Performance Review—this includes resources allocated in this budget and those previously allocated.
- Last year the state allocated \$50 million to Management Efficiency and Performance Improvement competitive grants, but only \$17 million was actually awarded. This year's Executive Budget would propose to allocate \$100 million for these competitive grant programs. Instead these funds, except for the \$17 million needed to honor existing commitments, should be reprogrammed into formula aid.

All of us share a commitment to our students and schools. We look forward to working with you not only to provide these funds, but to get New York State back on track with ensuring every student's right to a sound, basic education.

Yours in Partnership,

 Kevin Pahn	 Bud Haysman	
 T. Lulla	 J. Lulla	 Jim M. Surr
 Almanu Spring	 Dariusz	 Ted Bauer
 E. Ael	 John Stawski	 James Farrell
 Cecilia Kacyk	 J. Sandoz	 L. Lulla
 J. Lulla	 M. Lulla	 J. Lulla
 Timothy	 J. Lulla	

Letter Signatories:

1. Senator Kevin Parker
2. Senator Brad Hoylman
3. Senator Gustavo Rivera
4. Senator Tony Avella
5. Senator Joe Addabbo
6. Senator Jose Serrano
7. Senator Velmanette Montgomery
8. Senator Terry Gipson
9. Senator Ted O'Brien
10. Senator Eric Adams
11. Senator Toby Ann Stavisky
12. Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson
13. Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk
14. Senator James Sanders
15. Senator Adriano Espaillat
16. Senator Jose Peralta
17. Senator Martin Malave Dilan
18. Senator John Sampson
19. Senator Tim Kennedy
20. Senator Dan Squadron