



THE 4201 SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

Testimony Presented to
Fiscal Committees of the New York State Legislature
Hearing On
FY 2017-2018 Executive Budget
January 31, 2018
Albany, New York

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Cleary School for the Deaf (Nesconset)	New York Institute for Special Education (Bronx)	St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf (Brooklyn)
Henry Viscardi School (Albertson)	New York School for the Deaf (White Plains)	St. Joseph's School for the Deaf (Bronx)
Lexington School for the Deaf (Queens)	Rochester School for the Deaf (Rochester)	St. Mary's School for the Deaf (Buffalo)

Hello, my name is Bernadette Kappen, and I am executive director of the New York Institute for Special Education. With me today is Timothy Kelly, Vice Chair of the Association and Superintendent of St. Mary's School for the Deaf in Buffalo.

As Chair of the *4201 Schools Association*, representing nine private state-supported schools serving students who are deaf, blind and severely physically disabled throughout New York State, I would like to extend our appreciation for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the 2018-19 Executive Budget as it relates to issues impacting our students.

To begin, we would like to thank the Legislature for your longstanding support of our students. Specifically, we appreciate the 2.4% increase provided in last year's budget. This increase, which resulted in a \$2.3 million increase for our schools, was the third in a row for our children's education in the past seven years. In addition, we are pleased that the 2018-19 Executive Budget continues the past 3 years' investments. The continuation of the increases by the Executive enables our schools to invest in our teachers and professional staff with confidence. Combined, these investments have increased our base funding of \$6.9 million. The state's investment in our schools is now almost back to the 2008-09 levels, when our funding was cut in deficit reduction measures.

Despite the lack of growth from 2011 to 2015, expenses associated with running our schools rose nevertheless. Managing rising costs for pensions, health care, security and specialty services has been challenging for each of our schools. From 2008 to 2015, our schools maintained achievement-oriented programs for 1,500 students while reducing payroll nearly 11 percent – or approximately \$9 million. We are truly grateful to the Legislature and the Governor for your support of our students and schools.

GROWTH PER YEAR

Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Growth	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2.3 million	\$2.3 million	\$2.3 million

Parity with School Aid Increases - Our students have special needs and services – like visual alert systems, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and specially trained and certified teachers and therapists - that our schools are uniquely able to provide.

Each of our schools is dedicated to fulfilling the full potential of each of our students, regardless of their level of ability. We celebrate the success of all our students, whether she or he graduates with a Regents diploma, a Skills & Achievement Credential or Commencement Credential for Children with Severe Disabilities. Our schools provide our students with a level of independence that allows for their continued academic and personal growth. Our kids truly enjoy being at school and average daily attendance ranges from 85 to 95%.

We hope that as you discuss additional investments in public education you continue to consider the students who receive their education at our schools and provide a **similar** increase. Our students are as deserving as their non-disabled peers attending public schools are. Similar to last year, we recommend that any increase be provided directly to the schools and be considered ongoing operational support. A direct increase also ensures that local school districts are not adversely impacted.

Short-Term & Long-Term Capital Needs - While we are extremely grateful for the state's investments in our schools, the accumulated effect of level finding has hampered our ability to maintain our facilities and grounds appropriately. Our schools were established decades ago in communities around the State by philanthropic organizations, and most of our school buildings are now older (For example, the New York School for the Deaf was founded in 1817, the New York Institute for Special Education in 1831, and the Lexington School for the Deaf in 1864). Our facilities are aging and the needs of our students are changing. Our schools are now in need of both short-term and long-term capital support:

- We recommend the investment of \$5 million for the 4201 schools in support of short-term deferred maintenance. The health and safety of our students and staff is critical. An investment would allow our schools to, upgrade electrical services, plumbing, or lighting,

update fire and safety equipment, or make classroom modifications to meet student needs, etc.

- In addition, we request the opportunity to engage existing Dormitory Authority authorization for another series of long-term capital projects.

We remain grateful to the Legislature for including our schools in the Smart Schools Bond Act of 2014. Each of our schools has worked to apply for and receive support under this important program.

The 4201 schools are proud to be a partner with New York State in ensuring high quality educational opportunity to students with low incidence disabilities. We take our responsibility to provide each of our students with a safe and healthy environment by which to grow and succeed. We appreciate the support provided that makes our schools a reality to the students we serve across the state. Thank you.

Submitted by,

Bernadette M. Kappen, Ph.D.
Chair, 4201 Schools Association
Executive Director, New York Institute for Special Education

Timothy M. Kelly
Vice Chair, 4201 Schools Association
Superintendent, St. Mary's School for the Deaf

Background Information

For more than 200 years, the people of New York have relied on the expertise of the 4201 Schools to provide educational services to children who are deaf, blind and severely physically disabled. There are eleven “4201” schools located throughout the state, both upstate and downstate.

A Board of Directors governs each of our schools, which receive financial support for operating expenses from the State and depend on private donations for program enhancements and innovations. The 4201 Schools have established a long tradition of excellence in education and in providing innovative educational services to our students and their families.

The 4201 School Association’s members and their locations are as follows:

○ Cleary School for the Deaf - Nesconset	○ Rochester School for the Deaf - Rochester
○ Henry Viscardi School- Albertson	○ St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf -Brooklyn
○ Lexington School for the Deaf - Queens	○ St. Joseph's School for the Deaf - Bronx
○ New York Institute for Special Education – Bronx	○ St. Mary's School for the Deaf - Buffalo
○ New York School for the Deaf - White Plains	

Under Section 4201 of the Education Law, the State has designated and authorized certain private schools to serve the special education needs of deaf, blind or physically disabled students. Students come to 4201 Schools upon application by their parents or school districts, and with the approval of the State Education Commissioner. Several 4201 Schools maintain residential programs funded through a separate lump sum budget appropriation.

Only students who are profoundly deaf, legally blind, severely physically disabled, or severely emotionally disabled are referred to the 4201 Schools by local school districts, parents, physicians, clinics and other interested parties. An intake evaluation by the 4201 School is completed, and placement is conducted upon the approval of the student's home school district and the Commissioner of Education. Approval is based on the availability of an appropriate education program. There are no charges or fees to parents for educational costs, transportation, room or board.

Our students benefit from the academic programs, vocational programs, life skills programs and other specially designed programs at the 4201 Schools. They also take part in the interscholastic sports and other extra-curricular and co-curricular activities at their school. Our schools also work with children with multiple disabilities, for whom the schools are educational/therapeutic environments that foster growth and development in all areas - academic, sensory, and physically. Some of our students with multiple disabilities may always need certain supports to achieve an interdependent adult life, but for whom academic and personal success is attainable and an important part of our schools' mission.

Some students live on campus for five days a week at several of the 4201 Schools. These students are those who need a 24-hour structured environment as noted in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or whose homes are too far to commute to school each day. There are comprehensive learning and recreational programs for students residing in school dormitories.

The 4201 Schools provide quality education services to children with low incidence disabilities. Our schools are working constantly to support the academic progress and success of the students we serve.

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