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SENATOR JOHN C. LIU
MAJORITY ASSISTANT WHIP
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CHAIRPERSON
NYC EDUCATION COMMITTEE

COMMITTEES
EDUCATION
FINANCE
BUDGET AND REVENUE
TRANSPORTATION
RULES
ALCOHOLISM AND
SUBSTANCE ABUSE

April 21, 2020

To our esteemed Federal colleagues:

As you may know, New York was the only state with a budget timeframe falling squarely in the middle of the COVID-19 onslaught here. Nonetheless, we passed the state budget three weeks ago, essentially on-time albeit with great uncertainty. Given that an 11-digit deficit (\$10-\$15 Billion) materialized seemingly overnight, the budget assumed that draconian cuts to vital state services would be sequestered in the absence of substantial federal funds. In fact, because of your tremendous leadership on education needs in the CARES Act, we were able to eliminate proposed cuts in school funding and hold our Foundation Aid flat from the prior school year. We are deeply grateful for that effort.

Now the fiscal impact of COVID-19 is facing us head on and yesterday, Governor Andrew Cuomo stated that without additional and long-anticipated federal aid, school funding in New York could face a 20% cut. This is simply unthinkable.

We need you as our warriors on Capitol Hill to fight for the \$500 billion aid package to state governments advocated by our Governor along with the bipartisan National Governors Association. Extraordinary federal aid has been secured for major industries and small businesses; similar aid without stipulated restrictions is needed by state and local governments to ensure that vital public sector workers who run our hospital, transportation, school, and public safety systems can continue their indispensable efforts for all New Yorkers. Furthermore, the federal funds must be apportioned to states based on need and COVID-19 prevalence, and not based on overall population headcounts as earlier rounds of COVID-19 aid had been allocated. New York is the epicenter of the public health disaster in our nation and we should be receiving federal aid proportionate to that reality.

In addition, we urge you to add substantially to the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund in the next bill, so that New York's public school students will have sufficient resources to recover from school closures and COVID-related challenges - and so our districts get the funds in order to meet those needs.

We also urge that you allocate additional funds to both public and private institutions of higher education, and that such funds would expand minimum and maximum financial awards and expand eligibility for financial awards for SUNY, CUNY and independent colleges to deal with the impact of the Covid-19 crisis in New York State. Again, we urge that these additional funds flow directly to these institutions.

Our constituents in New York need you more than ever before! In your deliberations this week, please fight, gloves off, for the state and local aid package, providing funding without restriction to states and localities, and apportioned to reflect the pandemic's inordinate impact on New York. Thank you for your unwavering efforts and commitment.

Sincerely,

Shelley Mayer
Chairperson, Education Committee

Toby Stavisky
Chairperson, Higher Education Committee

John Liu
Chairperson, NYC Education Committee

Kevin Thomas

Leroy Comrie

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Andrew Lanza

cc:

Senator Chuck Schumer
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Rep. Lee Zeldin
Rep. Peter King
Rep. Thomas Suozzi
Rep. Kathleen Rice
Rep. Gregory Meeks
Rep. Grace Meng
Rep. Nydia Velázquez
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Rep. Brian Higgins