



11 North Pearl Street, Suite 1411
Albany, New York 12207

info@nycan.org
www.nycan.org

Christina Grant, Executive Director
NYCAN: The New York Campaign for Achievement Now

Introduction

Hello, honorable members of the Assembly Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees, and thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Christina Grant. I am the founding executive director of NYCAN: The New York Campaign for Achievement Now, a nonprofit advocacy organization committed to closing opportunity gaps throughout the state. Our goal is to do everything we can to make sure every child has access to a great public education.

I speak today in another capacity, as well:

Born and raised in Hempstead, Long Island, I am a lifelong New Yorker and a former public school teacher. I believe in my bones that public education deserves an investment – of our best thinking, our best people and our best resources. Moreover, that investment must be smart, strategic and focused on the work that produces results for our kids.

I believe the Executive Budget proposal demonstrates that type of investment—particularly its focus on:

- Full-day pre-school programs geared toward high-need students in low-income areas;
- Expanding the school day or the school year to better serve our children;
- Nurturing community schools that will integrate social, health and other services;
- Maintaining the state’s commitment to teacher evaluation reform;
- And (the focus of what I will be addressing today) increasing the state’s investment in early college high school.

Early College High Schools

There are 23 early college high schools serving hundreds of New York students across the state, mostly from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Nationally, early college high schools have provided an all-important mechanism to help kids afford college and prepare for the rigors of higher education. By offering additional supports in high school and exposing students to college-level coursework, these programs offer students and their families ongoing assurance that they will be truly prepared for college. According to the Early College High

School Initiative, more than 85 percent of students nationwide who graduated from early college programs in 2007 did so with a significant amount of college credit and 65 percent were accepted into four-year baccalaureate programs. Studies show that providing financial support to early college students from low income communities boosts college matriculation rates, helping to close the achievement gap.

The initiative—made successful by so many hardworking educators and students—is well worth the Governor’s recommended \$4 million in state funding, bringing the state’s total investment in early college high school programs to \$6 million. This financial support will improve college access and success for student groups historically underrepresented in New York’s higher education system.—

I respectfully urge the Legislature to protect this investment in an important program, and to protect the rest of Gov. Cuomo’s proposed investments in our public education system. Taken together, they would strengthen the state’s cradle-to-career pipeline.

In this proposed budget, I am glad to see an investment in education despite the economic hardships we face in New York State.

Accountability

Even in difficult financial times, the governor is calling for augmented support for our schools. The totality of his proposed education investment—a 4.4 percent increase over last year—could bring New York closer to making good on its promise of education as the great equalizer. We have a saying at NYCAN: “Great schools change everything.” The genesis of great schools can be great policy. And dollars and cents make policy ideas into reality.

The proposed executive budget provides an opportunity to again discuss not only how much we spend, but how we spend it. The Executive budget calls for smart, strategic and focused investments—Investments in areas that are shown to work, that are a departure from the standard way of doing business and producing the same mediocre results.—

However, money is no silver bullet.

Conclusion

In closing, New York has the opportunity, through continued support of Early College High Schools and investing in areas like of pre-K and extended learning time, to reinforce the state’s cradle-to-career pipeline.

Thank you very much for allowing me to appear before you today and I wish you nothing but the best in your budget deliberations.

I’d be happy to answer any questions you may have.