

TESTIMONY

Joint Legislative Hearing of the

NEW YORK STATE

ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

&

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

On

Executive Budget Proposals for Education

SFY 2021 – 2022



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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 is a pleasure to be with you again today, and we are grateful for your support and friendship during this extraordinary time for our State.

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 2021-2022.

School Aid & Foundation Aid – In general, terms, CSA supports the Executive’s efforts to maintain support for schools in New York City and throughout the State. While CSA will continue to advocate for increasing the resources allocated for the purposes of keeping our schools safe havens of learning, making sure that our schools have the resources they need during the pandemic emergency should be our collective goal.

However, we are concerned about several proposals within the Executive Budget affecting New York City’s schools adversely, including the following:

***Services Aid** - The Executive Budget proposes to consolidate 11 expense-based aid categories into a single “Services Aid” block grant, and funded at*

\$3.3 billion, a reduction of \$683 million from present law. New York City would see a disproportionate reduction under this proposal, estimated at \$500 million.

Fiscal Stabilization Grants - *The FY 2022 Executive Budget proposes to eliminate Fiscal Stabilization Grants. New York City would bear \$26.4 million of the total \$45 million cost of eliminating these grants.*

Charter Schools - CSA represents three unionized, conversion charter schools. CSA is also concerned with two Executive Budget proposals relating to charter schools (subject to the availability of federal funds):

Charter School Facilities Aid - *The FY 2022 Executive Budget proposal would eliminate state reimbursement to New York City for the cost of charter school co-location rental assistance.*

Charter School Supplemental Basic Tuition - *The FY 2022 Executive Budget proposal would reduce the state's assistance to school districts for the cost of charter school tuition by 50%.*

Conversion Charter Schools – CSA recommends the creation of a new category of support: *Conversion Charter School Supplemental Aid*. Our three 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.

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)***¹, 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 2021-2022 state budget. This \$475,000 appropriation helps sustain 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

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

year and summer institutes, all free of charge to public school leaders. *During the COVID-19 emergency, ELI has shifted its programming online, and this important work has continued throughout last year and is underway in 2021 too.*

We ask for your continued support of this important work. CSA respectfully requests a **\$575,000** grant for 2021-2022 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 we anticipate a high turnover in school leadership in coming months. A study 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.

Retirement Incentive - During periods when New York has faced difficult financial times, policymakers have enacted retirement incentives as a means to achieve savings. Most recently, an incentive was approved during the Great Recession to help close budget deficits. CSA urges the Legislature to advance an early retirement incentive this year, and that our members have an equal opportunity to participate.

Conclusion – As I mentioned earlier, CSA is deeply grateful to state leaders for their support and guidance throughout the COVID-19 emergency. Similarly, CSA members have guided their school communities through many days of

uncertainty, fear, and trauma since March, and this work continues. 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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