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Tanesha Grant

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Foundation Aid Formula Testimony

I am Tanesha Grant from Harlem and Washington Heights NYC. My son is a bright 17 yr old attending high school at Eagle Academy in Harlem D5. My grandson is a curious bright 7 year old that attends a D75 school in D4 of NYC. My grandson also happens to be non-verbal and autistic. I am a mother and grandmother 1st and also a community organizer. My CBO tackles education and social justice issues. I also sit on CB 12. I'm here in my personal capacity as a mother who has been working on education equity issues. I was 1 of the parents who advocated for the campaign for fiscal equity for years.

My son has been in Eagle Academy since 6th grade, He's now going to the 12th in the fall. When he started 6th grade he was so excited. Now as an 11th grader he just wants to be done. Eagle is a Title 1 school so we always need funding. My grandson D75 school always needs more funding too. Working in our Harlem D5 school community we know our children need more money attached to them individually in foundation aid to give our children a high quality culturally responsive and relevant education.

Qualified teachers, principals, DOH school nurses, social workers, counselors, aides, family liaisons are needed to keep our babies mental well being stable are not available to the students. These type of student support are vital to help students sustain good mental health. We don't have enough funds to maintain these services to our kids. My son always wanted to play a guitar but that isn't available at school Very little thought is given to providing arts and music to our students because school administration often have to make really hard choice between support core curricula which often leads to no money left to offer students any other activities.

My grandson gets speech therapy for 30 mins 3 times a week. My daughter tried her best to get him into early intervention programs but of course 6 years ago we got the run around when asking for resources so my grandson did not get early intervention. I have seen with my own eyes children like my grandson needing extra support but not getting it, He doesn't have the technology he needs to communicate with us. The school doesn't have the resources to buy this

expensive technology to help my grandson learn to communicate with us. That one of the reasons we raise money at PSPNY to give students access to technology. The digital divide is everywhere and the gaps in who has access to technology is limited. Foundation Aid Formula should be able to take care of every individual student no matter what the weight is.

All children in NYS by law are entitled to a sound basic education and we know that hasn't been happening because we had to fight for that funding for decades. Yes we won the campaign for fiscal equity BUT the current foundation aid formula was created in 2007. I don't think its appropriate to say that the campaign was fully funded when our children still aren't getting the individualized dollars we fought so hard for. Our students seem to never get what they need. Parents, students and education advocates have testified, demonstrated and even walked to Albany to get this funding and its based on a model created 17 years ago. I ask this commission to make that make sense. I also ask the commission to question why things like ventilation systems, air conditioning, heat and the conditions of our old school buildings aren't factored into the foundation aid formula when we know that depending on a child's environment this can have a very negative affect on their learning. Weights should be added if a child is in Foster care or unhoused. I was that foster kid and I can tell you I had no support for me and that was 40 years ago. I will continue to advocate to support our students. This is a sound investment into our students' future.

The Foundation formula should be updated to reflect the real cost of educating students today, so that every public school has the resources it needs to support all students. Any modifications to the formula must be made on the basis of how much it costs to ensure public schools are getting the resources to meet their students' needs.

Underfunding public education is not “sustainable,” and not an option. The state's fiscal circumstances should not form the basis for calculating the true cost of educating a child. We cannot afford to deprive our kids of the resources and opportunities they need to succeed, and we cannot neglect to prepare them for life. Our children's future, and the future of our state, depends on it.

Signed,
Tanesha Grant
D5 Harlem Parent & Parent Advocate