

Testimony for the Rockefeller Institute of Government's Hearing on the Foundation Aid Formula

July 16, 2024

Hello. My name is Vincent Corletta. I am a proud ELA teacher in District 27 at MS 137, South Ozone Park, Queens.

I am here today because the current Foundation Aid formula fails my school in three critical ways.

It does not provide enough funding for students in temporary housing.

It does not provide enough funding to lower class sizes.

It does not provide enough funding to address the mental health needs of our students.

Our newest New Yorkers have gone through traumatic experiences just getting to NYC.

I have heard some of the stories, but they are not mine to share. These children need help not only in English instruction, but in navigating a new country and new places with different customs. There is an intense amount of pressure on these students as they often are the translators for their parents/guardians. We educators do as much as we can when we can. But it shouldn't be left to individual educators only.

Now is the time to fix these flaws with Foundation Aid.

If we had smaller class sizes, I could develop deeper connections with my students and provide deeper learning experiences.

But once again the Foundation Aid formula does not provide.

So not only do I have students with major needs — those staying in temporary housing or learning a new language — but my classes far exceed the 23 students set in the new class size law.

And with the major influx of the new New Yorker students, these class sizes can balloon quickly and overnight. The current Foundation Aid formula is not enough to meet the new class size law requirements — not in terms of staff or space.

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Finally, the current Foundation Aid formula is not enough to address the mental health needs of all students.

We have nearly 2,000 6th-, 7th- and 8th-graders. We have three guidance counselors — one per grade level, so each is responsible for more than 800 students. We have two social workers. You do the math.

My school and my administration do the best we can with what we have.

Yet, any time there is a crisis, or the ever-growing issue of young students with suicidal ideation, there is a scramble.

An emergency demands and receives a response, but that's not meeting students' needs in any sustainable way. Students are asking for our help. Just as for class sizes, I ask, "how can you build a relationship with a student when you are tasked with 600 students?"

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