

## Testimony in Support of Better Funding for the Rochester City School District

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I am writing to express my support for better funding for the Rochester City School District (RCSD), specifically in the area of Pre-Kindergarten education. As someone deeply concerned about the future of our children and our community, I believe it is crucial that we invest in high-quality early education.

### The Impact of High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education

High-quality Pre-Kindergarten education can significantly influence a child's future, especially for those in low-income communities. [It can improve early literacy, math, and social skills, reduce the likelihood of repeating a grade in elementary school, and increase high school graduation and college attendance rates<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, studies show that investing in Pre-K education yields a return of up to \\$17 for every \\$1 spent<sup>1</sup>.](#)

### Current Preschool Funding Challenges

However, the current funding structure for the state-funded UPK program presents significant challenges. [When a school district joins the program, the per-student funding amount is set at either half the district's K-12 Foundation Aid amount or \\$5400, whichever is higher<sup>1</sup>. This amount can be adjusted based on student needs and community wealth, but the foundation aid formula currently uses outdated census data from the year 2000<sup>1</sup>.](#)

[Moreover, the per-student funding rate is frozen at the initial amount when the district opted into the program, and increases are only accessible when new students and classrooms are added<sup>1</sup>. For districts like Rochester that have near-universal enrollment, the frozen funding does not keep pace with inflation and rising costs, leading to reduced program quality over time<sup>1</sup>.](#)

### Consequences of Flat Funding

[In the 2022-23 school year, Rochester's UPK funding was \\$12,305 per student, compared to the \\$14,331 per K-12 student<sup>2</sup>. This stagnant rate makes it difficult for the RCSD to retain staff and invest in maintaining high-quality UPK programs<sup>1</sup>.](#)

### Proposed Solution

To address these challenges, I propose a reform in the funding structure. [Specifically, indexing UPK allocations to the K-12 Foundation Aid per-student amount for high-need districts like Rochester<sup>1</sup>. This ensures that UPK funding adjusts automatically with changes in the Foundation Aid per-student amount, irrespective of the district's enrollment growth<sup>1</sup>.](#)

The goal of the Foundation Aid Formula is to provide sufficient resources to provide all students in New York with a constitutionally “sound basic education”<sup>1</sup>. Underfunding public education is not “sustainable,” and is not an option. The state’s fiscal circumstances should not form the basis for calculating the true cost of educating a child<sup>1</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I urge you to consider these points and take action to improve the funding for the Rochester City School District. Our children deserve the best start in life, and that begins with a high-quality Pre-Kindergarten education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, [Your Name]