

School Administrators Association of New York State

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Testimony of the  
School Administrators Association of New York State  
Foundation Aid Formula

*A Study Undertaken by the Rockefeller Institute as requested by the State*

*Legislature*

August, 2024

## **Testimony for Public Hearings on Foundation Aid**

### **Introduction**

The School Administrators Association of New York State is pleased to participate in this public initiative to examine the foundation aid formula to ensure that it continues to provide sufficient and adequate resources to school districts as they carry out their expanding roles. On behalf of our organization, which represents over 22,000 building administrators and program directors, I would like to express our gratitude for the opportunity to provide input on the foundation aid formula as the Governor and Legislature work toward its revision.

### **Importance of Revising the Foundation Aid Formula**

Revising the foundation aid formula is a critical task at this point in time. As school administrators, we have witnessed firsthand the profound and ongoing impacts of the pandemic on our students and their families. The mental health and educational needs of our students have surged, and the demands on school districts have evolved significantly since the original foundation aid formula was established.

### **High Priorities for the Foundation Aid Formula**

For building administrators, there are two priorities for a foundation aid formula:

1. **Meeting the Needs of Students and Staff:** The formula must accurately reflect and address the evolving needs of students and staff. The programs and services provided by schools today are vastly different than when the formula was first introduced in 2007. Schools have expanded instructional programs that include increased early college, advanced placement courses, increased bilingual programs, and increased college and technical education programs. Mental health services and expanded special education

programs have been embedded into school functions out of critical student needs in these areas. As the Board of Regents begins to change graduation measures, schools will once again expand and change programs to meet new requirements and the changing needs of our state.

2. **Stability and Predictability:** The formula must be stable and predictable to allow school districts to plan and budget effectively. Districts are far too often shocked to see significant decreases in foundation aid funding due to formula factors that were modified or changed.

## **Recommendations for Revising the Formula**

1. **Revise the Per Pupil Foundation Amount**

The foundation amount per pupil, originally set at \$5,258 in 2007, no longer accurately reflects the current cost of effectively educating a student. The profile of students has changed, and schools have taken on additional roles. We recommend several approaches to updating this figure:

- **Update Data Sources:** Consider using more current data sources for student poverty calculations or explore alternative measures such as direct certification or updated regional cost data.
- **Adjust Weightings for Student Needs:** Increase the weighting for factors such as homelessness, special education, and mental health needs in the formula.
- **Enhance the Student Need Component:** Provide greater overall weight to the student need component in the formula.

2. **Ensure Stability and Predictability**

School districts frequently face challenges in projecting budget needs due to frequent and

unpredictable changes in the statutory formula. For instance, recent budget proposals have included reductions in inflation rates or imposed fiscal caps, and some programs have been included in the foundation formula without prior integration, impacting allocations negatively. We urge the adoption of a formula with reasonable and consistent variables, applied as specified by statute, to avoid these disruptions.

### **3. Reexamine Regional Costs**

The regional cost indices used in the foundation aid formula should be reassessed.

Districts in close geographic proximity often have significantly different regional cost indices, despite similar actual costs. We recommend exploring an increased number of regional categories to more accurately reflect local costs.

### **4. Address Student Enrollment Variability**

The formula must account for the dynamic nature of student enrollment counts. The pandemic has led to increased absenteeism, and districts need resources to manage these fluctuations. A formula that reflects real-time enrollment data, rather than a static point-in-time count, would be more effective.

## **Conclusion**

SAANYS appreciates the Governor's and Legislature's efforts to initiate this critical public conversation on foundation aid. Just as education is the backbone of our state's future, foundation aid represents the essential infrastructure for supporting our schools. We strongly advocate for full foundation funding for the 2024-25 school year and a minimum increase for all districts. We look forward to continued engagement on this issue and are ready to provide any additional information that may assist in this important work.

Thank you for your time and consideration.