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The Rockefeller Institute of Government  
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Albany, NY 12203

The Business Council of New York State, Inc. submits this letter to express our concerns as The Rockefeller Institute of Government conducts a study for a review and potential revision of the New York State Foundation Aid formula. As we strive to advance workforce and economic development across New York, it is crucial that the funding formula adequately addresses key issues impacting educational equity and school effectiveness.

One significant area of concern is the availability of advanced coursework, such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. These courses are critical for preparing students for college and can alleviate the financial burden on families by providing college credits during high school. Despite progress, access remains uneven. In 2023, while 57% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch, only 41% of AP test takers came from this group. This disparity underscores the need for targeted funding to support low-income students in accessing these valuable opportunities.

The Foundation Aid formula must account for the specific needs of New York City schools, which are mandated to reduce class sizes by 2028. This ambitious goal requires substantial financial resources and strategic planning. The current formula should be adjusted to include a detailed accounting of how funds are allocated and utilized to meet this mandate. It is essential to ensure transparency regarding the amount of funding each school receives, the timing of these funds, and how they are being employed to achieve smaller class sizes.

We would also like to emphasize the importance of considering the recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission's Graduation Measures into the Foundation Aid formula. This initiative represents a transformative effort, bringing together a broad coalition of students, parents, educators, administrators, and other key stakeholders to create a roadmap for a learning-centered education system. By focusing on competency-based learning, the initiative aims to equip students with the practical skills needed for the future workforce.

To support the successful implementation of these recommendations, it is crucial that funding be appropriately allocated, not only for the initial rollout but also for sustained success in subsequent years. This includes ensuring continued financial support for P-TECH schools beyond the grant period, which are vital in providing students with career-ready skills and bridging the gap between education and employment.

Lastly, New York State must address the negative impacts on educational advancement particularly in math and reading, as a result of the pandemic, on all students including students

with disabilities, English language learners, and students living in low socioeconomic communities. Many students have experienced learning losses due to various challenges, and targeted funding is necessary to support schools and districts in making substantial progress in these critical areas.

Specifically, the foundation aid should include:

1. **Incentive-Based Funding:** A separate pot of funding to encourage schools to offer and support AP and IB courses, particularly for low-income students.
2. **Class Size Reduction Accountability:** A transparent mechanism to track and report how funding is used to meet the class size reduction goals, including annual allocations and their impact.
3. **Educational Recovery Efforts:** Allocating funds specifically aimed at addressing learning losses in math and reading, ensuring schools have the resources needed to support students' recovery and academic advancement.
4. **Support for Graduation Measures Recommendations:** Allocate funding to implement the Blue-Ribbon Commission's Graduation Measures Initiative, which aims to provide a learning-centered education and essential career skills. Ensure continued support for these initiatives and P-TECH schools beyond the grant period to sustain success and bridge educational and career pathways.

By addressing these areas, we can make significant strides toward closing educational equity gaps and ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed. New York can lead the way in providing equal access to high-quality education and effectively meeting the challenges posed by the class size reduction mandate.

We appreciate the Rockefeller Institute of Government's attention to this important matter and look forward to the positive impacts that a review of the foundation aid formula can bring.



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