



September 4, 2024

The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government  
411 State Street  
Albany, NY 12203

**RE: Public Comment Regarding New York State Foundation Aid Formula**

On behalf of The Century Foundation (TCF), thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the Foundation Aid formula. TCF is a progressive, independent think tank that conducts research, develops solutions, and drives policy change to make people's lives better. TCF scholars have conducted research on education policy for over two decades and TCF's research has influenced policy at the federal, state, and local levels including within New York State.

Ensuring that schools and school staff are equipped to meet the educational needs and challenges of students is critical to their success. Equitable and sufficient school funding helps to guarantee that every public school student receives an education on equal footing with their peers. Securing public education for all students—including students in the foster system—starts with funding and ends with a thriving student population and bright futures for our youngest New Yorkers.

Governor Hochul and the State Legislature's [commitment to fully fund Foundation Aid](#) for the first time in 2023 was welcome news after years of underfunding. However, the [formula on which funding is based is 17 years old](#) and needs to be updated to keep pace with rising costs and the needs of students and schools today. The current formula does not fully account for various student populations including students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and low-income students. Additionally, the formula does not address the additional needs of students in special circumstances like students in the foster system.

According to data from the state education department, there are [8,179](#) students in the foster system in New York State. The count is based on point-in-time data which only includes the number of students identified as being in foster care on a certain date. The true number of students—which fluctuates throughout the school year as children enter and exit the foster system—may be higher than what is reported on the state's website.

Whether 8,000 or more, this group of students have some of the most challenging educational outcomes of all student subgroups. In 2023, only about [half](#) of the students in the foster system graduated from high school in four years, compared to 86 percent of all students. During the same school year, only about [a quarter](#) of third through eighth grade students in the foster system earned proficient grades on their state English Language Arts and math exams, compared to over 50 percent for students not in the foster system.

[tcf.org](https://www.tcf.org)

[Recent research](#) conducted by TCF with current and former foster youth revealed that New York students in the foster system require more support to succeed. Providing and/or increasing academic, mental-health, and life-skills support for these students can go a long way in ensuring that they have the tools they need to succeed. Creating programming to support these students including building out student-led organizations of students with similar experiences can also help to provide a source of support throughout the school day. Importantly, ensuring that school staff have the appropriate training to understand how to best support these students through a trauma-responsive lens is also critical to student success. These interventions would be all the more possible with increased funding explicitly and exclusively for these students.

**The updated Foundation Aid formula must include a per-pupil weight for students in the foster system to ensure that these students receive the extra funding and supports needed to thrive academically and socially in our schools.** It is important that the weight be applied even if students fall into multiple categories. For example, students who are English Language Learners and in the foster system should receive funding to support their needs in both areas. The funding should also take into account school changes and variability regarding the number of students in the foster system that a school might serve throughout the school year. With additional funding for increased programming and support, these students, who are in the government's care, can receive the support they need to achieve their goals and dreams.

We are happy to respond to any questions regarding the content of this comment; please contact Chantal Hinds at [hinds@tcf.org](mailto:hinds@tcf.org). Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on behalf of The Century Foundation. We urge you to include these recommendations in the final Foundation Aid formula report.

