

**Testimony to be submitted to the Rockefeller Institute of Government**  
**Re: The Foundation Aid Formula**  
**September 4th, 2024**

This testimony is on behalf of the Citywide Council on Special Education. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the New York State Foundation Aid Formula. Citywide Education Councils in the city of NY, are charged with promoting student achievement, advising and commenting on educational policies, and providing input to the chancellor and the Panel for Educational Policy. We are dedicated to providing the tools, support, and resources necessary to empower special education students, their families and their educators to succeed. Let's work together towards a brighter future.

The council advocates for all students with disabilities throughout the city, including but not limited to students with disabilities who are in temporary housing, are multilingual, newly arrived and who come from disenfranchised communities. As parents of children with disabilities we've seen and felt the impact of citywide and statewide budget cuts to education. We have heard directly from families who've been affected by school staff turnover including teachers, nurses, related service therapists, social workers, counselors, aides, psychologists, behavioral specialists, family liaisons, etc. Our council has heard from families and providers alike of the damaging effects of enlarging classroom sizes. It's inhumane.

There have been long standing inequities here in NY. In FY 2002, the State and the City evenly split the non-federal cost of NYC Public Schools. As expenses and services have grown, the City has invested more, and now spends more than \$8 billion more than the State. In FY 2025, the City will fund 57% of the cost of NYC Public Schools, and the State only 37%. Foundation Aid was created 20 years ago, currently uses the 2000 Census and has not been reviewed or updated since. It is weighted similar to the Fair Student Formula, but way less nuanced when it comes to student needs. Astonishingly it is the first time fully funded in 2 decades (Foundation Aid). In actuality \$10B is about 25% of State education funding.

**The states fiscal circumstance should not form the basis for calculating the true cost of educating a child.** Public education is the cornerstone of our democracy, and remains our best path to advancing equal opportunity at a time of deepening inequality. Public schools serve children of all abilities and identities, and turn away no one. Adequately and equitably funding our public schools to meet the diverse needs of students is not just important; it is essential to ensuring their success and our shared prosperity. Prioritizing public education means investing in a just and prosperous future for all New Yorkers. **Unfortunately, the Governor recently reduced the amount of aid to all districts based on increased inflation starting in 2025.**

Every child in New York has a constitutional right to a sound, basic education, and it is our government's responsibility to fund it, from Buffalo to Long Island, from the North Country to the Southern Tier. Students throughout the state and regardless of need or circumstance must have **fair education funding**. The Foundation Aid Formula must reflect the real cost of educating students today, not from 20 years ago.

The current Foundation Aid formula was created in 2007 to ensure that NYS was meeting this obligation, though it took until 2023 to bring schools to full funding levels. Over the past 17 years, the needs of students have evolved and grown tremendously, especially over the past 4 years since the pandemic began.

The Foundation formula should be updated to reflect the real cost of educating students today, so that every public school has the resources it needs to support all students. Any modifications to the formula must be made on the basis of how much it costs to ensure public schools are getting the resources to meet their students' needs. Please see [this tool](#) that compares expected vs. enacted budgets for '24-'25.

We agree with the Department of Education's proposed changes to the Foundation Aid Formula:

- 1. Update the "successful school district" model on which the formula is based, to better reflect the cost and expectations of education today.**
- 2. Provide support for Students in Temporary Housing and Students in the Foster System. NYC has already taken the lead on this work, adding a Students in Temporary Housing weight to our city formula in the school year 2023-24.**
- 3. Expand aid for special education and Multilingual Language Learners, growing student populations NYC and many other districts. This could mean differentiating funding based on student needs, as the NYC formula does.**
- 4. Review the Regional Cost Index metrics, which have been fixed in the formula since 2006, while costs of living downstate have gone up substantially.**
- 5. Provide some aid related to the newly mandated class size caps, which only apply to New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) and are estimated to cost \$1.4 - \$1.9 billion according to NYCPS, the NYC Comptroller, and the Independent Budget Office.**

**Underfunding public education is not “sustainable,” and not an option.** The state's fiscal circumstances should not form the basis for calculating the true cost of educating a child. We cannot afford to deprive our kids of the resources and opportunities they need to succeed, and we cannot neglect to prepare them for life. Our children's future, and the future of our state, depends on it.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please email us at [ccse@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:ccse@schools.nyc.gov).

Signed,

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