



New York State Federation
of School Administrators

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

TESTIMONY

**Joint Legislative Hearing of the
Assembly Ways and Means Committee**

&

Senate Finance Committee

On

Executive Budget Proposals for Education

SFY 2016-17

www.nysfsa.org

On behalf of the New York State Federation of School Administrators, I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony regarding the Executive Budget for State Fiscal Year 2016-17. I am *Mark Cannizaro*, NYSFSA president and executive vice president of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators.

NYSFSA represents 14,000 active and retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Education Administrators and other school supervisors from Buffalo, Yonkers and New York City.

We want first to thank you, the Governor, the Governor's Common Core Task Force and the State Board of Regents for the recent regulatory changes that at last will move the education accountability discussion beyond how heavily we tie student testing to teacher and principal evaluations. These changes are sensible and appropriate, and we hope that policymakers can embrace what is right with education, and rely on research-based initiatives that will actually lead to student achievement, such as personalized learning, collaborative leadership, and strong curriculum instruction and assessment.

Foundation Aid - As many advocates will likely testify to your committees, NYSFSA believes that the \$2.1 billion increase over two years proposed in the Executive Budget just isn't enough for our State's schools in the coming year.

The \$991 million proposed increase for SFY 2016-2017 is less than half than what our schools need. In our view, addressing the requirements of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case is fundamentally important, and the documented inequities between rich and poor schools must be confronted now – this year.

The Executive Budget would devote only \$266 million of the \$4.4 billion in Foundation Aid that remains due and owing as a result of CFE lawsuit. We ask for your commitment to a major increase in Foundation Aid.

Community Schools & Receiverships — NYSFSA supports the Executive Budget proposal of \$100 million in support of Community Schools, but must say it won't be enough. Community schools are organized to directly confront the problems faced by many children and many schools, the societal and social crises that arise in many children's lives.

In order for children to learn, schools must do more to be safe places that are conducive to learning. What that means today is different than it was in the past – as children need help with the challenges of poverty, health, nutrition, homelessness – as these all impact their ability to learn.

We must suggest that more must be done – and more must be spent – to support persistently struggling schools. In SFY 2015-2016, the Governor and Legislature added \$75 million to support 20 persistently struggling schools, for which we are grateful. But the Executive Budget proposal for next year is to spend \$100 million for 124 struggling and persistently struggling schools. We recommend that an appropriate amount be funded for all 124 schools.

Dream Act - NYSFSA strongly supports enactment of the “DREAM Act” - so important for the progress of immigrant children who attend our P-12 public schools. We support allowing immigrant students to apply for state financial aid for higher education.

Parental Choice in Education Act – NYSFSA opposes the “Parental Choice in Education Act” proposed in the Executive Budget. This proposal would divert at least \$150 million away from public schools and services while simultaneously underfunding Foundation Aid by more than \$4 billion. Providing tax credits to the wealthy by granting up to a \$750,000 tax credit diverts revenue from the state, while at the same time public schools remain significantly underfunded.

We can support the Executive Budget proposal to establish a tax credit for the cost of instructional supplies purchased by an educator, if such credit eligibility includes purchases made by Principals too. But it must be said that the entire discussion of tax credits would be unnecessary if public schools had the resources they still need and the law requires.

School Safety Funds – NYSFSA supports the continuation of the NYSAFE Act proposed in the 2016-17 Executive budget, which provides enhanced aid for the purchase of stationary metal detectors, security cameras and safety devices for electrically operated partitions. The 2016-17 Executive Budget also recommends changes to existing school safety plans to require mandatory annual training of all staff, the designation of a chief emergency officer, and the modernization of plans to include responses to emergencies, such as lock-down drills. NYSFSA requests

that Principals - the school leaders - be intimately involved in the development of safety plans in each school.

Supporting School Leaders – The work of school leaders – principals and assistant principals – is elementally important to the success of schools and the educational progress of children. Over the years, school leaders have encountered the incredible demands of rising education standards while simultaneously managing flat or decreasing school budgets. The role of instructional leader has become even more crucial, as policymakers across the country have become much more sensitive to student achievement and eliminating college and career readiness gaps among our youth.

In order to ensure that school leaders successfully manage and meet these ongoing challenges as well as succeed in their role as instructional leaders, New York State must provide our school leaders, Principal and Assistant Principals, with access to ongoing professional development. The research-based literature related to effective schools and student achievement has long acknowledged the critical role of Principals in leading a highly complex human organization (a school) into a cohesive and collaborative community of learners.

In closing, I am grateful to bring the voices and concerns of school leaders to your attention, and we thank you for your continued support of our work.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Cannizzaro, President