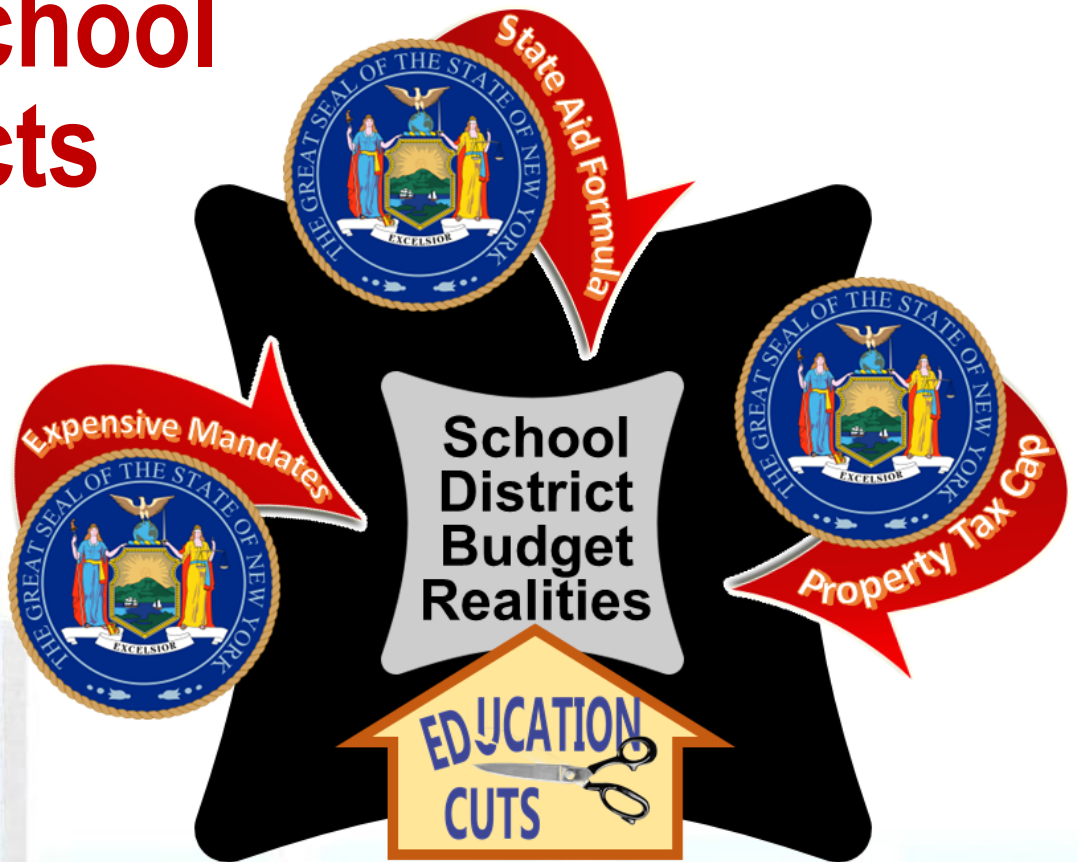


Affiliate Network NEWSLETTER

March 2024

Governor's education aid proposal hurts all our school districts



All our districts will be negatively impacted under Governor Hochel's proposal for education aid. However, NYS legislators for the most part do not support her plan. More about the situation and how we might impact the final decision can be found on the next few pages.



FUNDING FOR OUR SCHOOLS IS AT RISK!

All our districts will be negatively impacted under the Governor's proposal for State Aid to Education for the next school year.

ACCORDING TO THE NYS LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS –

"The League of Women Voters of New York State (LWVNY) strongly opposes Governor Hochul's recent decision to alter the formula that is used to distribute aid to our State's school districts. The Executive Budget published on January 16, 2024 shocked even the most knowledgeable professionals in New York education finance, as well as the New York State Regents and their staff, who had published their recommendations in December. None had anticipated that the Executive would step back from a commitment that had been made to fully fund Foundation Aid, as it had been calculated in prior years. The Executive altered both the Consumer Price Index methodology and the policy of reducing aid to no district year to year. As a result, nearly half of our State's school districts will be forced to reduce their 2024-25 school budgets or raise local taxes. They will have no time for planning if the budget is not finalized until the end of March 2024...In legislative hearings on February 1, 2024, elected officials on both sides of the aisle were united in their outrage. Calls for action to protest the formula changes came from organizations and individuals came from the legislators themselves."

ACCORDING TO THE NYS SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION -

"The Executive Budget proposal for 2024-25 appears to pull back from the substantial progress New York has made with Foundation Aid funding in recent years. The proposal is hundreds of millions of dollars below full funding, since it appears that some districts would even see cuts to their Foundation Aid, reversing a decades-long practice of holding school districts harmless.

As the budget stands now, NYSSBA expects many districts would need to absorb unanticipated Foundation Aid reductions and alter budget projections in ways that are likely to negatively impact programs and services. Districts are already grappling with the upcoming expiration of federal stimulus funding, and the academic and social-emotional needs of our students remain high.

School boards continue to support comprehensive revisions to the state's Foundation Aid formula, including crucial updates to antiquated demographic data, to deliver on its promise of a sound basic education for all students".

NYS FOUNDATION AID FORMULA NEEDS REVIEW

Foundation Aid needs to reflect current conditions in NYS public schools using updated census data. Inflation, staff shortages, and supply chain disruptions have drastically increased pressure on district resources, while many needs have intensified. State lawmakers deserve thanks for adopting a plan to fully fund Foundation Aid over three years, as part of the 2021-22 state budget. As that three-year period comes to an end, districts will continue to need a state aid system that is dependable, predictable, and responsive to the educational environment, with minimal manipulation by political processes. Developing this aid system should include a review of lessons learned about the aid formula during the past 20 years and changes to the educational environment since the formula was first constructed. Part of that process should be a study to determine the current cost of educating a student. The current Foundation Aid formula is rooted in the standard cost to educate a student, which in turn is based on those costs in "successful schools" as they existed 20 years ago. Factors such as new standards and programs, new mandates, changing technology, and growing student needs should be considered in this study. **The study should calculate the cost of these new programs and ensure funding for their implementation. Many new mandated programs were added since the tax cap was enacted.** Data on the financial impact of any new legislation should be collected and made available to the public before it's voted on by the state legislature.

More about the need to study the NYS education funding formula can be found at
https://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba_pdf/gr/2023-legislative-priorities-12082022.pdf

TAKE ACTION TODAY. See pages 4 – 5.



FUNDING FOR OUR SCHOOLS IS AT RISK!

DISTRICTS NEED MANDATE RELIEF

Public school districts more than ever must depend on NYS for financial support, especially to fund new state mandates. When the property tax cap was imposed, local governments were promised mandate relief to help balance local budgets without loss of programs and services. The promised mandate relief has yet to materialize.

Districts are required to keep their local school property taxes at or below the state required cap, but this is becoming more and more difficult when costs for essential programs and services continue to increase beyond that cap, and new expensive mandates are imposed. This situation has led to cutting some valuable programs.

The cost of mandates should be borne by the government that imposes them. OR, mandates should be in the form of recommendations.

PROPERTY TAX CAP A MAJOR UNFUNDED MANDATE

Public school districts have two main sources of revenue; state aid and property tax levies. With the Tax Cap legislation, the State now controls both of those sources.

Our school districts authorize a spending plan based on state and federal mandates, as well as programs valued by district residents. NYS provides Foundation Aid, which is the state's constitutional obligation. The local tax levy is based on a home's assessed value, which is a process controlled by your town(s) and the state.

In 2011, New York State passed the Tax Cap Law to establish a limit on the annual growth of property taxes levied by local governments (counties, cities, towns, villages) and school districts outside the Big Five Cities of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers, and New York City.

The tax levy cap does consider many of the increases that school districts must absorb, including inflationary increases, health insurance costs, and other mandated costs that usually exceed 2% in any given year. With a 60% majority needed for a tax cap override, and tight controls over reserve funding, school districts have no flexibility to absorb additional imposed costs.

The imposed tax cap should exclude costs that districts do not have the ability to control. One example is state-mandated contributions to state pension funds. All pension fund rules and fiscal decisions are made by the state while all funding comes from local districts.

- ▶ Under the tax cap, legislation not fully funded should be a recommendation, not a mandate.
- ▶ The tax levy limit needs to be changed to allow school districts to comply with a 2% floor, or the CPI, **whichever is higher**.
- ▶ A simple majority should be used when a school district asks for the community to override a tax levy limit to preserve the constitutional right of one vote per voter.

State leaders cannot ignore their decade-old promise to provide mandate relief to districts operating under a tax cap.
If mandate relief is not provided, the state should eliminate the tax cap.

TAKE ACTION TODAY. See pages 4 – 5.



BUDGET EQUATION for NYS Public School Districts

$$\text{State Aid Formula} + \text{Expensive Mandates} + \text{Property Tax Cap} = \text{EDUCATION CUTS}$$

Outdated State Aid Formula doesn't cover population shifts or mandates of last 20 years.

Increasing numbers of increasingly expensive state mandates are not supported by state aid.

State law prohibits increasing needed support locally via property taxes.

Districts must reduce or eliminate, effective and valued educational programs and services.

How you can help

- The LWV-NYS recommends that we call Governor Hochul and ask her to restore all funding for Foundation Aid for our school children, saying something like:

"I strongly oppose Governor Hochul's recent decision to alter the formula that is used to distribute aid to our State's school districts. The changes made in her proposed budget will significantly reduce foundation aid to nearly half of all school districts in the state. I implore the Governor to amend her proposal and reinstate full funding to our schools."

- Contact state legislators and legislative leaders to seek additional State Aid to Education, mandate relief, and help with the property tax cap.

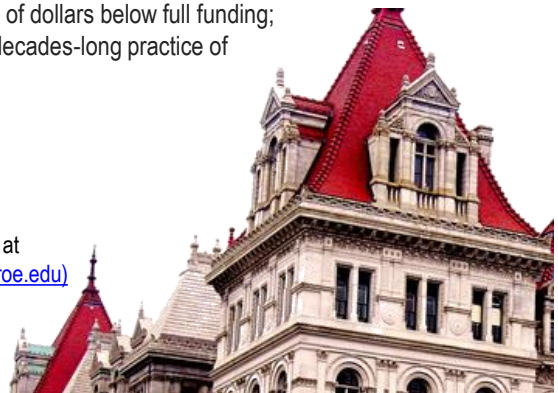
SAMPLE MESSAGES TO LAWMAKERS -

A few sample letters are offered – to be adjusted to fit your circumstances or used as is:

- I am writing to seek your support for an updated State Aid Formula based on current education goals and their costs. I am requesting your continuing efforts to secure the best education possible for our young people by seeking a state-level study of the Aid formula to account for changes in population, costs of educating students, increasing student needs, costs of new technologies, and costs of compliance with new expensive state mandates enacted since the 2000 census. Thank you for considering this matter.
- I am seeking your support for fair and adequate funding of public education in NYS as established in the NYS Constitution and supported by recent court decisions. Our district has kept our local school property tax at or below the state required cap, even as costs for essential and/or state-mandated programs and services have exceeded that cap, leading to cuts to some valuable programs. Therefore, I am seeking your support in increasing support to our public schools beyond the Executive Budget proposal for 2024-25 which counters the recent substantial progress New York has made with Foundation Aid funding. The Governor's proposal is hundreds of millions of dollars below full funding; some districts would even see cuts to their Foundation Aid, reversing a decades-long practice of holding school districts harmless. Thank you for considering this matter.

Contact information for state lawmakers can be found on page 5.

For more about the effects of the school tax cap, access the MCSBA position statement at [MCSBA NYS Tax Cap Explained 2023 Tri-Fold COAC Legislative Committee.pdf \(monroe.edu\)](https://www.mcsba.org/Portals/0/2023%20Tri-Fold%20COAC%20Legislative%20Committee.pdf)
The tax cap formula and other information on the tax levy cap can be found at:
<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/realprop/index.htm>.



Contacting State Officials

Leaders of NYS Executive and Legislative Branches

The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor The Executive Chamber, The Capitol, Albany 12224
(518) 474-8390 between 9 A.M. & 5 P.M. <https://www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form>

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Majority Leader, NYS Senate scousins@nyssenat.gov

The Honorable Robert Ort, Minority Leader, NYS Senate Ortt@nyssenat.gov

The Honorable, Shelley Mayer, Chairman, Senate Education Committee smayer@nyssenat.gov

The Honorable, Liz Krueger, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee lkrueger@nyssenat.gov

NYS ASSEMBLY The Honorable Carl E. Heastie, Speaker, NYS Assembly speaker@nyassembly.gov

The Honorable Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes, Assembly Majority Leader PeopleC@nyassembly.gov

The Honorable William Barclay, Assembly Minority Leader BarclayW@nyassembly.gov

Our School Districts and the State Lawmakers Who Represent Them**

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| BRIGHTON | Senators Samra Brouk and Jeremy Cooney; Assemblymembers Harry Bronson, Sarah Clark, Jen Lunsford |
| BROCKPORT | Senators George Borrello, Robert Ort II; Assemblymembers Stephen Hawley, Josh Jensen |
| CHURCHVILLE-CHILI | Senators George Borrello, Jeremy Cooney, Pamela Helming; Assemblymembers Marjorie Byrnes, Josh Jensen, Demond Meeks |
| EAST IRONDEQUOIT | Senator Samra Brouk; Assemblymembers Sarah Clark, Jen Lunsford, Brian Manktelow |
| EAST ROCHESTER | Senator Samra Brouk; Assemblymember Jen Lunsford |
| FAIRPORT | Senators Samra Brouk, Pamela Helming; Assemblymembers Jen Lunsford, Brian Manktelow |
| GATES CHILI | Senators Jeremy Cooney, Pamela Helming, Robert Ort II; Assemblymember Sarah Clark, Josh Jensen, Demond Meeks |
| GREECE | Senator Jeremy Cooney; Assemblymembers Sarah Clark, Josh Jensen, Demond Meeks |
| HILTON | Senators Jeremy Cooney, Robert Ort II; Assemblymembers Stephen Hawley, Josh Jensen |
| HOLLEY | Senator Robert Ort II; Assemblymember Stephen Hawley |
| HONEOYE FALLS-LIMA | Senators Samra Brouk, Jeremy Cooney, Pamela Helming; Assemblymembers Harry Bronson, Marjorie Byrnes, Jen Lunsford |
| KENDALL | Senator Robert Ort II; Assemblyman Stephen Hawley |
| PENFIELD | Senators Samra Brouk, Jeremy Cooney, Pamela Helming; Assemblymembers Sarah Clark, Jen Lunsford, Brian Manktelow |
| PITTSFORD | Senators Samra Brouk, Jeremy Cooney, Pamela Helming; Assemblymembers Marjorie Byrnes, Sarah Clark, Jen Lunsford |
| ROCHESTER | Senators Samra Brouk, Jeremy Cooney, Pamela Helming; Assemblymembers Harry Bronson, Sarah Clark, Demond Meeks |
| RUSH-HENRIETTA | Senators Samra Brouk, Jeremy Cooney, Pamela Helming; Assemblymembers Marjorie Byrnes, Sarah Clark, Jen Lunsford |
| SPENCERPORT | Senators Jeremy Cooney, Robert Ort II; Assemblymembers Josh Jensen, Demond Meeks |
| VICTOR | Senators Samra Brouk, Pamela Helming; Assemblymembers Marjorie Byrnes, Jeff Gallahan, Brian Manktelow |
| WEBSTER | Senators Samra Brouk, Jeremy Cooney, Pamela Helming; Assemblymembers Sarah Clark, Jen Lunsford, Brian Manktelow |
| WEST IRODEQUOIT | Senators Samra Brouk, Jeremy Cooney; Assemblymember Sarah Clark |
| WHEATLAND-CHILI | Senators Jeremy Cooney, Pamela Helming; Assemblymembers Marjorie Byrnes, Sarah Clark, Demond Meeks |

** NYS legislative district maps are in flux as the new boundaries determined for the 2022 elections are still being drawn. Many legislator pages do not reflect the same information as the state legislative mapping tool, and this mapping will likely continue to change. Therefore, this information is only as accurate as possible.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR LAWMAKERS WHO REPRESENT US IN ALBANY

NYS Senators

All Senators with their contact information are listed at
<https://www.nyssenat.gov/senators-committees>

NYS Assemblymembers

All Assembly Members with their contact information are listed at
<http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/>.

Learn more about our school districts and their successes by exploring [A Community Together \(ACT\) for Education \(actforeducation.org\)](https://actforeducation.org). This website highlights the fine work being done in all our districts—and serves as a hub for information about our public schools.