

New York State Educational Conference Board



January 26, 2015

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The New York State Educational Conference Board – comprised of the seven leading educational organizations representing parents, classroom teachers, school-related professionals, school business officials, building administrators, superintendents and school boards – calls upon the state to immediately release a 2015-16 state aid proposal and corresponding school aid runs allocating the approximate \$1.1 billion increase as presented by the Governor last week.

In our collective memory, it is unprecedented for the state to withhold the release of executive budget aid runs. These aid runs are not simply a state budget “tradition,” they are necessary and indeed critical to the local budget development process for hundreds of school districts across the state.

Just like at the state level, the budget process begins well before any voting deadlines. All stakeholders in the school district community, including taxpayers, parents, teachers, students, school boards and other school leaders play an important role. Without projected aid runs, school districts cannot responsibly develop their budgets or adequately involve our communities in the process.

In fact, the property tax cap, first proposed and enacted by the state in 2011, requires school districts to utilize the executive budget aid runs that are currently being withheld to formulate a tax cap calculation. Under the tax cap law, school districts are required to submit a “2016 Proposed Levy” to the state by March 1st in order to calculate a district-specific tax cap figure. Establishing a proposed tax levy is impossible without knowing projected state revenue.

In order to establish the tax cap calculation as of March 1, State Education Department guidance directs school districts to use “applicable executive budget computer runs” to estimate anticipated building aid and transportation aid. The withholding of aid runs makes this impossible.

The budget bills released Wednesday also do not include any language regarding how any potential state aid would be distributed. Even if a school district had the time and capability to decipher the state’s traditionally complex school aid formula, they would still not be able to estimate their aid based on the information missing from the executive proposal. We call on the Governor to amend his Executive Budget proposal to include a state aid proposal that allocates and distributes to school districts the approximate \$1.1 billion school aid increase cited in his State of the State address. For school districts, until that is done, the Executive Budget is simply incomplete.

This is not a matter of politics or even a policy debate. This is a matter of basic government function and an informed decision making process for our communities. School districts should not be held hostage in this process. The current situation is chaotic and dysfunctional. The Governor should release a state aid proposal and associated aid runs without delay.

Sincerely,



John Yagielski
Chair



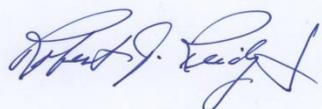
Bonnie Russell
President
New York State PTA



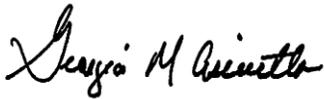
Timothy Kremer
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Kevin Casey
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cc: Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver
Assembly Majority Leader Joseph Morelle
Senate Leader Dean Skelos
Senate IDC Leader Jeffrey Klein
Assembly Republican Leader Brian Kolb
Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Assembly Education Committee Chair Cathy Nolan
Senate Education Committee Chair John Flanagan