

## **Proposition 1: Fairness for small city students, communities**

Scattered across the state from Niagara Falls to Jamestown, from Batavia to Binghamton, from Poughkeepsie to Plattsburgh, from Glen Cove to Long Beach, a group of 57 school districts has been operating at a significant disadvantage from the hundreds of others. They are New York's small city school districts, and thanks to an archaic provision in the state constitution, they have been limited in their ability to address much-needed capital improvements that affect the health, safety and learning environments for nearly one-quarter of a million children.

And it's not for lack of will. State law restricts these districts to a 5 percent debt limit compared to the 10 percent limit that applies to the rest of New York's more than 600 public, suburban and rural school districts. This means that small city school districts cannot accomplish construction in the same way and are instead forced to stagger projects, often resulting in more significant delays, even higher costs and more prolonged learning disruptions for students.

This hurdle has delayed improvements and placed a higher financial burden on small city schools and the communities they serve. In many instances, projects have been needlessly piecemealed to the detriment of students' abilities to grow and succeed compared to peers in neighboring districts.

The current debt limit is a relic from decades past when there were many differences in laws governing small city school budgets. Now these districts are subject to all the same budget vote procedures and property tax cap limits as their suburban and rural counterparts. In short, this outdated provision is now doing more harm than good.

Thankfully, the solution exists and is close at hand. When New Yorkers go to the polls on Nov. 7, they can and should support Proposition 1 on their ballot. It would allow small city districts to operate under the same debt limit as the rest of New York's school districts, freeing them to efficiently plan and complete construction and infrastructure projects at a reasonable scope and scale.

To be clear, a "yes" vote for Proposition 1 does not allow for no debt limit; instead, it sets in motion an already approved bipartisan plan awaiting the Governor's signature to give small city districts an equal fiscal toolbox.

A "yes" vote for Proposition 1 will support a historic effort to ensure that every school district in New York can invest in their students and communities.

There is no shortage of controversy and division regarding education these days. But we can all agree that all schools should have the same ability to create the best possible learning environments for our kids. A "yes" vote on Proposition 1 will do just that.

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