

School Districts and an Untimely State Budget

As state budget negotiations continue, our groups understand that state budget extenders are necessary to ensure the continued provision of government services. At the same time, it is important to highlight the quickly approaching timeline challenges that school districts will be facing as they develop their own budgets, especially with the Legislature scheduled later this week to begin a break due to last until April 28.

As required by law, school districts outside the “Big 5” cities must offer their budgets for approval by voters on May 20. State law and regulations also prescribe a series of deadlines these districts must meet in the run-up to the votes:

- **April 22** – Districts, other than small cities, must finalize all items to appear on ballots for the May votes – board of education candidates and propositions, including proposed budgets; small city districts must do so by May 5.
- **April 25** – Districts, other than small cities, must distribute military ballots; small city districts must do so by May 6.
- **April 28** – All districts subject to budget votes must submit “property tax report card” data to the State Education Department; this effectively requires all district school boards to adopt the budget proposals they will ask voters to consider before the 28th, a Monday.

While the Big 5 school districts in New York State do not have local budget votes, delayed adoption of a state budget could have consequences for their local budget processes and negatively impact their ability to prepare for the upcoming school year.

The greater their district’s reliance on state support and the greater the uncertainty over what final school aid figures will be, the more time local leaders may need to evaluate options and settle on a budget proposal for voters to consider.

Due to experiences over the last decade and a half, many district leaders have had little or no practice dealing with a state budget which has been *both untimely and uncertain*. In 2023, for example, the state’s budget was not passed until early May, but aid figures were essentially set as the state followed through on its multi-year commitment to fully fund Foundation Aid. This history means that districts have not had to finalize a budget proposal with large uncertainties over state aid since the property tax cap took effect (starting with the 2012-13 school year). This makes a challenging process even more difficult.

We urge the Legislature and Governor to come to agreement soon on a state budget that adequately and effectively supports New York's public schools.

The New York State Educational Conference Board is a coalition of seven leading public school organizations representing parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, building administrators, business officials, superintendents, and board members across the state.