

## MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

### **Increasing the Cap on BOCES CTE Salary and Special Services Aid**

Action is long overdue to increase state support for career and technical education opportunities in our schools. The members of the New York State Educational Conference Board (ECB) support the inclusion of a meaningful increase in the cap on state aid for BOCES instructor salaries in the enacted state budget. Additionally, the ECB calls for a proportionate increase in special services aid for CTE programs in the Big 5 and other non-component districts.

At present, BOCES Aid is provided as a reimbursement to participating districts for up to \$30,000 per position. This reimbursement level was set in 1990, taking effect in 1992, when the median teacher salary for New York State was just over \$43,000.<sup>1</sup> At that time, \$30,000 represented about 70% of the median teacher's salary. Now, \$30,000 represents only about 35% of the average teacher's salary.<sup>2</sup> Adjusted for inflation, that \$30,000 cap would equal over \$67,000 in today's dollars. This length of time – which is now longer than two generations of learners moving through the school system – without a raise in the cap has effectively increased the costs absorbed by districts every single year.

This cap applies to all BOCES instructor salaries, but its impact is felt perhaps most strongly in the realm of career and technical education (CTE) instruction. As inflation has caused the net purchasing power of salary aid to become lower and lower, BOCES enrollment overall – and the demand for CTE instruction in particular – has only grown. CTE is critical to New York's ability to compete economically and demand for qualified technical professionals is growing by the year.

To this end, ECB strongly supports the proposals made by both the Senate and the Assembly in their budget proposals. Both houses have proposed increasing BOCES salary aid to \$60,000 over three years. Both proposals would bring the cap just under the 30-year rate of inflation, which would simply restore purchasing power. This increase would be phased in at \$10,000 intervals over three school years.

In addition, ECB supports the Senate's proposal to increase Special Services Aid for non-component districts by raising the per-pupil reimbursement rate from \$3,900 to \$4,300. Both houses have also proposed expanding the pupil count for special services aid purposes to include 9<sup>th</sup> graders, allowing the overall basis on which aid is allotted to be more reflective of actual student need.

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<sup>1</sup> NYSED. [Available](https://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/stats/table7.html) at <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/stats/table7.html>.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent average salary is \$84,066 per NYSED.

The fiscal impact of this key measure would be negligible in the overall scheme of the state budget. SED estimates that for each \$10,000 increase in the cap, it would cost the state \$27 million. Moreover, as BOCES Aid reimburses school districts for prior year expenses, there would be no cost to the state until its 2026-27 fiscal year. The cost of this would more than be worth the return on investment from growing the state's technical professional market.

School district and BOCES CTE programs have proven highly effective in helping provide students with the essential skills they require to successfully transition to college and career. The growth in popularity of such programs reflects their success. It is well past time for the state to agree to increase the aidable cap on BOCES salaries for career and technical education instructors and to provide a proportionate increase in special services aid. Such programs grow student interest and provide a direct path to successful employment for thousands of students.

For all of these reasons, we strongly urge the Legislature and Governor to increase the cap on BOCES CTE salary and special services aid as part of a final budget agreement.

*The New York State Educational Conference Board is comprised of the Association of School Business Officials New York; the Conference of Big 5 School Districts; the New York State Council of School Superintendents; New York State PTA; the New York State School Boards Association; New York State United Teachers; and the School Administrators Association of New York State.*