KEY POINTS

Increase State Aid:
• The Educational Conference Board estimates an increase of $1.6 billion is needed to enable schools to preserve current services. The Executive Budget proposes an $726 million increase in School Aid, plus $100 million committed to Community Schools and other programmatic initiatives.
• The state should continue to accelerate progress toward full funding of Foundation Aid for districts furthest from that goal while guaranteeing all districts a minimum increase matching the inflation rate used in the property tax cap (1.81%). The minimum in the Executive Budget would be only 0.25%.
• The final budget should increase support for career and technical education by raising the aidable salary limit for BOCES Aid and a corresponding increase for Special Services Aid. Districts also need funding to improve student mental health services and support English Language Learners.

Reject Consolidating Expense-Based Aids:
• Folding 10 “expense-based” aids into Foundation Aid should be rejected. It would erode predictability in school district financial planning, diminish direct support for career and technical education, and threaten the viability of BOCES.

Reject Changes to Building Aid, Transportation Aid, and Funding of Residential Special Education Placements:
• Proposals to change Building Aid, Transportation Aid, who pays for residential special education placements would impose more costs for school districts to absorb within the property tax cap.
• The Building Aid changes would make it impossible for district leaders to make or keep promises to their communities on the actual local share of future capital projects. Even though prospective, the proposals might derail plans now well-along in planning.
• The proposed cap on Transportation Aid would not match real cost as tight labor markets drive up the compensation districts must offer to attract and retain bus drivers. Transporting homeless children and students with disabilities to out-of-district special education programs can also drive up costs.

Amend Paid Time Off for Voting
• The 2019 law allowing employees three hours off to vote should be amended to restore the prior exclusion for employees who have at least four hours to vote before or after their work shift. Some districts report having as many as 40% of teachers absent on this past November’s Election Day. The June primary falls on a Regents Exam day.

Raise Capital Outlay Limit
• Increasing the capital outlay exemption from $100,000 to $250,000 annually would enable schools to address small but critical capital needs with next-year state reimbursement. This provision is rarely used in downstate communities because the current limit is so low.

Tax Cap
• The permanent tax cap will be more workable with common sense adjustments to the carry over provision, pension exclusion, and the impact of PILOTs on the property tax base growth factor.

see reverse side for information on logistics...
Things to Remember

- The above points are written from a statewide perspective. Please be sure to use stories from your district’s circumstances to personalize your discussion.

- Be polite and courteous. Thank legislators for meeting with you. Follow up meetings with thank you notes and sustained contact. Establish yourself as a resource for lawmakers on education issues.

- Go into meetings with a plan (who will speak first, who will present which points, etc.) and a purpose (what you hope to accomplish).

- Be sure to focus on your central talking points and asks. Present your most important asks first. Time is limited, stay on topic and on message.

- Do not make up answers to lawmaker questions. Tell them you will get back to them on their question. Make sure you do get back to them.

- Be very deliberate in your comments and asks; do not let others attempt to define your position or walk you back from a stated position.

- Be assertive without being overly pushy, confrontational, or argumentative.

- Remember that disagreements in policy should never be made personal.

- If a lawmaker is not definitive in stating positions, ask honest and straightforward questions.

- If you are not able to meet with your lawmaker personally today, make an appointment to meet with them in their district or ask for them off the floor of the Senate/Assembly chamber (this is very common, and in fact where the term “lobbying” comes from).

- Remember that “all politics is local.”

- Remember that your issue is the most important issue.

Logistics

- Empire State Plaza, the State Capitol, and the Legislative Office Building are located one block directly west of the Hilton on State Street (up the hill). Please refer to the map of Empire State Plaza (provided) to determine how to enter each building. The Legislative Office Building is accessible via either the Capitol or the underground concourse.

- Room numbers in both the Capitol (CAP) and Legislative Office Building (LOB) are arranged by floor number. Room 510 is on the fifth floor, room 410 is on the fourth floor, etc. Senate and Assembly room directories are displayed next to the elevators in the LOB. Senate and Assembly Chambers are on the third floor of the CAP. Senate and Assembly public viewing galleries are on the fourth floor of the CAP.

- Add extra time to wait in the security line when entering the CAP or LOB. No knives, concealed carry, or other weaponry allowed. Remove coats, belts, watches and all metal from pockets to speed security line.

- As we are expecting large crowds, it is in your best interest to utilize one of the four stairwells in the LOB to traverse floors, if possible for you. Waiting for an elevator may cause you to be late to meetings.

- Good luck and most importantly, remember to have fun!