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Statewide Superintendents Council Commends Board of Regents for Adopting Strong Proposal to Aid Public Schools

ALBANY – The New York State Council of School Superintendents today praised the Board of Regents for adopting a state aid proposal that will help public schools meet growing needs among the children they serve.

Council Deputy Director Robert Lowry said, “The Regents are the leaders of the state’s education system and we look for them to stand up for the state’s schoolchildren and the public schools that serve them. The Regents have done that with this state aid proposal.”

Lowry explained that the Regents’ proposal is consistent with recommendations of the [Educational Conference Board](#) released last week. ECB is a coalition of public school groups representing parents, teachers, school building administrators, other school staff, superintendents and board members.

ECB recommended a total increase of \$2.2 billion and stressed the importance of updating and phasing-in the Foundation Aid formula to help schools meet growing needs among schoolchildren.

Lowry noted, “Even as overall student enrollment has declined statewide, the number of students poor enough to qualify for the free or reduced-price school lunch program has grown by double-digit percentages in most counties since the Foundation Aid formula was enacted in 2007.”

He went on, “Students qualifying for the school lunch program grew by 15 percent statewide between 2007 and 2017 and by nearly 30 percent outside New York City. In 2017, more than half the students in most of the state’s counties were poor enough to qualify for reduced-price school meals.”

The eligibility cut-off for the current school year is an annual income of \$38,443 for a family of three.

ECB also found that there have been similar percentage increases in students with other needs which can add to school costs, including students for whom English is not the first language and students with disabilities requiring special education.

Lowry added, “Schools are also dealing with demands that were barely on their radar screens a decade ago. For example, in surveys we have done, the percentage of superintendents naming improving student mental health services as a top funding priority rose from 35 percent two years ago to 56 percent this year. Also, some other sources of help for children and families have diminished due to cuts that municipalities have had to make.”

“The Regents have joined the Educational Conference Board in calling on the state to make a strong commitment to phasing in a Foundation Aid formula,” Lowry said. “Taking steps to also update the formula is a cornerstone in creating a more financially sustainable future for school districts and assuring that every student, everywhere, can have the opportunities we would want for our own children,” he added.

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Lowry concluded, “The Foundation Aid formula has been an under-appreciated achievement in public policy. It still generally drives the greatest aid per pupil to the neediest school districts. But more than 10 years have passed since it was first enacted and now it needs to be updated. Student needs have grown and the ability to raise local funding to meet those needs has been limited by the property tax cap and is now jeopardized by the new federal cap on deductions for state and local taxes.”

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The New York State Council of School Superintendents is a professional and advocacy organization with over a century of service to school superintendents and assistant superintendents in New York State. The Council provides more than 800 members with professional development opportunities, publications and personal support while advocating for public education and the superintendency.