

OPPOSE

Elimination of State Reimbursement for Residential Placements for Students with Disabilities

The Council of School Superintendents opposes the Executive Budget proposal to make permanent the elimination of state reimbursement for room and board costs for residential placements made by a school district committee on special education.

The enacted 2020-21 state budget eliminated the 18.424% state share of these costs. The legislation also required school districts to assume the 50% of costs previously paid by the state toward maintenance costs of students at the state schools for the blind and deaf at Batavia and Rome, respectively. This provision was set to sunset at the end of that fiscal year but was extended in the 2021-22 and 2023-24 budgets.

The new Executive Budget would make this state funding cut permanent and is projected to cost school districts outside New York City nearly \$28 million next school year. Schools already struggle with significant special education costs with prescriptive mandates that do not necessarily guarantee better outcomes for students.

This cost shift places an increased financial burden on local school districts. The impact can be especially dire for small, poor districts, where one additional placement might consume most or all of whatever revenue might be raised by a property tax increase within the tax cap.

It could also adversely affect some of our most vulnerable students and the special act school districts and other programs that serve them. The increased financial burden on districts threatens to close the door of access for students who suffer complex trauma due to abuse and who are affected by serious mental health conditions. Without access to the therapeutic services and the 24/7 stable environment provided by a residential placement, these youth may remain in cycles of crisis.

The Council opposes permanently eliminating the state share for residential special education placement costs