

## Streamline Paperwork Demands Upon School District Leaders, End Duplicative Financial Transparency Reports

An accretion of reporting and planning requirements is forcing school district leaders to divert time and attention from responsibilities more essential to students and taxpayers, especially in districts that are small, poor, or both. Some districts may have added administrative positions to satisfy these requirements.

The Executive Budget would add two more mandated reports, to gather data on participation in prekindergarten and progress toward zero-emission school bus transitions.

As a first step in streamlining paperwork demands, we urge ending the duplicative school level financial reporting imposed at the initiative. It should be allowed to expire—as scheduled—on June 30, 2023. Regrettably, the Executive Budget would extend this mandate for an additional five years.

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act required the nation's school districts to report *actual* per pupil expenditures for each school building, broken down by personnel and non-personnel spending and by funding source, starting by the end of the 2019-20 school year.

The 2018-19 state budget enacted a proposal by then Governor Cuomo to mandate that districts report similar school-level data for *planned* expenditures. This initiative was an attempt to divert attention from the state's own actions in funding public schools.

There is no value to mandating separate reporting of both planned and actual expenditures by school. There are many circumstances which result in justifiable variances in planned and actual school spending—arrivals and departures of students, needs to replace equipment, teachers going out on leave, and students found to need additional help, for example.

The State Education Department intends to launch a multi-agency review of all financial reporting requirements. But a review of *all* planning and reporting requirements is needed. Upon completion of a review, the Department should be empowered to terminate any obsolete or non-essential requirements, including some imposed under Education Law, with advance notice to the Governor and Legislature.

***To reduce pointless demands on school officials for information that does not add to greater public understanding of school performance and management, the Council urges repeal of the state school-level funding transparency reporting requirement and additional actions to relieve paperwork mandates.***