

NYSUT 2024 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES OF FOCUS: BUDGET

FOUNDATION AID: PROPERLY FUNDING OUR SCHOOLS AND KEEPING OUR PROMISES

- Despite the promise of full funding, the 2024-25 executive budget released in January underfunded Foundation Aid by \$419 million. Half of the state's school districts would receive less aid next year than the current year in this proposal, and ALL districts would receive less aid than they were promised. Furthermore, additional updates to school aid data in February show the need to provide supplemental resources to fully fund our public schools. Less than a year after the legacy victory of fully funding Foundation Aid, the state cannot turn its back on supporting our students and our communities.

Legislative Ask: Develop a budget that fully funds our public schools. Learn more at FundOurFutureNY.org

FIGHTING CHILDHOOD POVERTY

- One-in-five children in New York state lives in poverty. In one of the richest states in one of the richest nations, this is a travesty. Before they've ever entered a classroom, poverty is affecting students' abilities to learn and perform well in school. A child cannot learn while distracted by their own hunger or the fact that they are living in transitional housing. Poverty is a policy choice, and we can choose differently. Learn more at 1in5ny.org

Legislative Ask: Address our students' basic needs by building upon last year's school-meal expansion, strengthening student health care access and making housing affordable.

EXPAND THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODEL

- Community schools serve as hubs between schools, service providers and local organizations. They strengthen the entire community by connecting students and their families to wraparound services such as health care, legal aid, mentoring and housing assistance they might not receive otherwise. Because they are customized to address the unique needs of the local families, they work in every type of district: suburban, urban and rural. Community schools play an instrumental role in reducing and hopefully eliminating poverty.

Legislative Ask: Direct a \$100 million state investment of categorical aid to potentially double the number of community schools and hire community school directors. Learn more at PublicSchoolsUniteUs.org/CommunitySchools

THE NEW DEAL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: SUPPORT SUNY, CUNY & COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- Although SUNY, CUNY and community colleges received historic funding increases in last year's budget, the money wasn't distributed equitably, and SUNY campuses and hospitals statewide continue to struggle financially due to years of underfunding. In recent months, several institutions have announced forced cuts to vital programs, including a proposal to close SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, the city's only state-run hospital. New York must empower our institutions of higher learning to provide affordable, sustainable access to higher education now and into the future.

Legislative Ask: Support the New Deal for Higher Ed, which includes funding for more full-time faculty, better adjunct pay, more support for SUNY hospitals and increased funding for student mental health services. Learn more at PublicSchoolsUniteUs.org/NewDeal

FIX TIERS 5 & 6

- Fixing Tier 6 is about fairness and about keeping the teaching profession attractive to new candidates. Currently Tier 6 members must work longer and contribute more for a smaller retirement pension, compared to Tier 4 members. To address the teacher shortage and keep the profession appealing, we must fix Tier 6.

Legislative Ask: Reduce the final average salary calculation from five to three years for Tier 6 members, which would increase their pension earnings and offer parity with Tier 4. Learn more at FixTier6.org

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BOCES, CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SPECIAL SERVICES

- CTE programs offer students experiential learning opportunities that prepare them for future careers in fields like robotics, advanced technology, forensics and agriculture. These programs encourage a student's natural curiosity and potential and allow them to learn by doing. They pave the way to fulfilling career paths for students and a new wave of workforce development that incentivizes companies to invest in New York state. However, the primary drivers of CTE programs — BOCES and Special Services Aid in the big five city school districts — have limited ability to expand these programs. This is primarily due to an outdated funding structure from 1990 that caps how much state money can go toward CTE instructors' salaries at \$30,000.

Legislative Ask: Include the provisions contained in S.5024 (Mayer)/A.7481 (Conrad) to reform the BOCES and Special Services funding formulas to meet today's needs in the one-house budget bill.

SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- State-funded teacher centers provide continuous professional development and support for educators statewide. The executive budget eliminates funding for teacher centers, a \$21.4 million cut.
- Teaching children to read is complex. The science of reading is a science-backed, evidence-based approach that focuses on how children learn best. The executive budget allocates \$10 million for NYSUT ELT to develop educator trainings.

Legislative Ask: Restore \$21.4 million for teacher centers and support the \$10 million ELT allocation for science of reading professional learning opportunities.

ENSURING STAFF AND SERVICES AT SPECIAL SCHOOLS

- To maintain staffing levels at 4201, Special Act and 853 Schools, 4410 special education programs, and programs at local human service agencies, the state must invest in recruitment incentives and offer competitive pay to attract new candidates.

Legislative Ask: Support a 3.2 percent COLA for human services agencies, educational parity for special schools, and additional funding to create recruitment and retention programs for educators and direct service providers in special schools.

NYSUT 2024 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES OF FOCUS: POLICY

PROTECTING STUDENTS & EDUCATORS FROM EXTREME HEAT IN SCHOOLS

- When classrooms are too hot, students can't learn and teachers can't teach. This school year, more than 1,000 educators shared stories about extreme classroom heat. Stories ranged from cafeteria workers preparing and serving food in 100 degree-plus kitchens to students and educators requiring medical attention because of soaring classroom temperatures. But without action from district officials or state leaders, nothing can be done to beat the heat.

Legislative Ask: Support legislation S.3397 (Skoufis) /A.9011 (Eachus) establishing a maximum classroom and school facility temperature of 88 degrees and defining an indoor temperature of 82 degrees as an extreme heat condition day, requiring schools to take additional measures.

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HOW TO PAY FOR IT*

FIXING APPR

- The state's flawed testing system is not an adequate measure of student learning or performance and shouldn't be used to evaluate teachers. Instead, let local school professionals design ways to better support teachers and help them grow. Doing so would allow educators — and New York state — to put the emphasis back on what matters most in our classrooms: teaching and learning.

Legislative Ask: Support legislation that allows districts to develop evaluation systems that are locally controlled and prioritize teaching and learning instead of punitive testing.

REPLACING THE RECEIVERSHIP SYSTEM

- Receivership schools — those the state labels as “failing” — may have their operations taken over by state administrators. This places further restrictions on schools that already serve disadvantaged communities. Essentially, receivership punishes schools that we should provide the most help to — those facing additional challenges by educating students who are experiencing poverty, hunger and housing insecurity.

Legislative Ask: Support a system that gives schools and districts resources and tools to meet educational standards, not an arbitrary shame-and-blame system that disadvantages them.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

- NYSUT objects to expanding the number of, and providing additional state funding for, corporate charter schools in New York without holding them to the same standards of transparency and accountability that public schools must adhere to. Public schools unite our communities, whereas corporate charters fracture them by excluding students who don't fit their business model. Corporate charters operate without public and taxpayer accountability and focus on profits instead of the well-being of students, educators and families.

Legislative Ask: Support legislation S.4466 (Hoylman-Sigal) /A.4458 (Benedetto) that holds corporate charter schools to the same standards of transparency and accountability as public schools if they receive public funding.

NYSUT 2024 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES OF FOCUS: **POLICY**

REFORMING IDAs

- Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs) provide tax abatements to businesses to incentivize them to set up shop in their communities. But, these incentives often come at the expense of schools and students. According to a report issued by *Good Jobs First NY*, schools lost a total of \$1.8 billion in property tax revenue due to tax abatements granted by IDAs. And to make matters worse, IDAs do nothing to root businesses to a community. Rather, they entice businesses to move locations purely to take advantage of IDAs, all while negatively impacting school budgets.

Legislative Ask: Support legislation S.89 (Ryan) /A.351 (Bronson) to prohibit IDAs from waiving school taxes.

REFORMING THE PROPERTY TAX CAP

- The property tax cap limits school districts by constricting the annual growth of property taxes to 2 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is *less*. The only way to override the tax cap is by a supermajority vote of 60 percent on the budget. This puts burdensome limits on the funding available to schools.

Legislative Ask: Amend the tax cap law to allow school districts to put forth a budget with a tax increase of 2 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is *higher*, and to allow for a simple majority vote to override the tax cap.

NYSUT REVENUE PROPOSALS - 2024

In response to growing economic disparities and a critical affordability crisis in New York, NYSUT is supporting the "Invest in Our New York Revenue Package 2024." This comprehensive suite of legislative measures seeks to fundamentally reform the state's tax system, ensuring a more equitable distribution of wealth and addressing the fiscal needs of its residents. The package seeks to generate substantial revenue for public services, education, health care and infrastructure improvements, without burdening most New Yorkers.

WE NEED REVENUES TO:

- Improve Affordability
- Strengthen Our Public Schools, Colleges and Universities
- Invest in the Future of New York
- Address extreme inequality



The Capital Gains Bill (S2162-Rivera/A2576-Kim)

Projected Revenue: Over \$12 billion annually.

- **What It Does:** Introduces a surcharge tax on income from buying and selling stocks, affecting those earning over \$400,000 (single filers) and \$500,000 (joint filers). Tax rates would be 7.5% for income above these thresholds and 15% on capital gains over \$500,000 for higher earners.

IMPACT: Targets less than 1% of New Yorkers, aligning state tax policy more closely with labor income taxation.



The Progressive Income Tax Bill (S2059-Jackson/A3115-Meeks)

Projected Revenue: Over \$21 billion annually.

- **What It Does:** Creates new brackets for the state's personal income tax, affecting individuals earning over \$450,000/year (single) and \$500,000/year (joint). This bill targets the state's top 5% of income earners.

IMPACT: This bill only affects the top 5% of earners in New York state while bringing in billions in needed funds.



Corporate Tax Reforms (S1980-Hoylman/A3690-Kelles)

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Projected Revenue: Over \$7 billion annually.

- **What It Does:** Increases corporate tax rates for profits over \$2.5 million, with additional brackets for higher profits. It also aims to close loopholes and make technical changes to the corporate tax code.

IMPACT: Designed to not affect small businesses, applying to corporations doing business in New York, not just those headquartered in the state.



The Billionaires Tax (S1570-Ramos/A3252-Kelles)

Projected Revenue: Over \$20 billion in the first year and \$1.5 billion annually thereafter.

- **What It Does:** Taxes the unrealized gains of stocks and investment portfolios, requiring billionaires to pay income tax rates on these investment gains annually.

IMPACT: Aims to address economic inequality by taxing the richest individuals' investment gains.



