

New York State Educational Conference Board



Reject the Proposed Repeal of the Foundation Aid Formula

The New York State Educational Conference Board – comprised of New York’s leading educational organizations representing parents, classroom teachers, school-related professionals, school business officials, building administrators, superintendents and school boards – opposes the Executive Budget’s proposal to repeal the long-standing Foundation Aid formula. We commend both the Assembly and Senate for rejecting the proposal in their respective one-house budgets.

The Foundation Aid formula was enacted in 2007, following the resolution of the notable Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit. The formula represented a significant policy success and an important reform of the state’s education funding system. Foundation Aid incorporates the cost of educating a student, the needs of students within each district, variations in regional costs and the district’s local ability to support the cost of educating its students. The formula also served as a way for districts to understand and plan for the level of state support that they should expect to receive in a given year. This level of funding is rooted in the ability of districts to provide their students with a sound basic education, as guaranteed by the state Constitution.

As part of our 2017-18 School Aid proposal, ECB called for a firm commitment to fully-fund the Foundation Aid formula within three years. Efforts to restore the cuts made to school aid under the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) diverted the state from its focus on a functioning Foundation Aid formula and instead resulted in single-year aid distribution methods with little to no connection to previous or future years. The State Education Department has estimated the state to now be \$4.3 billion behind full phase-in of Foundation Aid as we enter budget negotiations for 2017-18. The elimination of the GEA allows the state to return its attention to the Foundation Aid formula in order to provide adequate and equitable funding for our schools.

Instead, the Executive Budget has proposed to repeal the Foundation Aid formula and leave schools without any basis for projecting state operating support beyond 2017-18. Not only would this proposal turn back the clock on the notable improvements made in 2007, but it would also return the state to an unpredictable and undependable school funding system that is not linked to actual costs of successfully educating students. The concept of Foundation Aid provides school districts and their communities with a level of transparency that fosters productive discussions about achieving school success. This enhances participation in the educational process and leads to higher levels of accountability.

The ECB urges the legislature to hold firm in their rejection of the proposed repeal of the Foundation Aid formula during final budget negotiations and commit to full phase-in of the formula within three years.