

# New York State Educational Conference Board



## Oppose the “Education Affordability” Tax Credit

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 Senate’s budget proposal to create a multi-million dollar education tax credit program.

New York’s public schools are charged with educating all students, whatever their circumstances, wherever they come from, whenever they arrive. The public schools must remain the state’s highest priority for education funding.

The Senate proposal would remove upwards of \$300 million annually from the state general fund in the form of tax credits at a time when experts agree state aid to public schools continues to be inadequately funded. Under the proposal, individuals, corporations and partnerships would be eligible for a tax credit of up to 90% on a contribution to organizations that benefit private schools and their attendees. The tax credits could be as large as \$875,000 per individual per year.

While the proposal includes public education organizations as eligible recipients of contributions, any funds received would ignore existing school aid formulas that reflect student and district need. The distribution of scarce financial resources for education under this proposal would be uneven and at the discretion of the donors and supporters; distribution would not be based on the educational needs of students in the various school districts throughout New York State. The likelihood is that schools in many of the poorest communities would derive little or no benefit. Such funds would be more appropriately and effectively spent through direct state funding of public educational programs.

In addition, the state already provided significant funding (\$250 million) to assist non-public schools as part of an end-of-year legislative agreement in 2015. These funds were approved in order to reimburse the schools for required services. At the same time, the state’s public schools are still waiting for nearly \$350 million in what are referred to as “prior year aid claims.” These aid claims have already been approved by the state for past school district expenses. However, a school district submitting a claim today would have to wait more than 15 years to receive their aid, based on current state funding levels.

At a time when the state is more than \$4 billion behind full funding of the Foundation Aid formula, the state should not be reducing its financial capability to properly fund school aid by diverting hundreds of millions of dollars annually from the general fund.

Public education is a constitutionally mandated function of state government, and, therefore, should always be the state’s top priority when providing funding for education. **The ECB urges the Assembly and the Executive to reject the Senate’s education tax credit scheme and any other similar proposals.**