



February 28, 2025

New York Congressional Delegation
Washington, DC 20515

To the Members of the New York Congressional Delegation,

We are writing on behalf of the New York State School Boards Association to encourage you to keep public schools top of mind as you make important budgetary decisions. Public schools serve the vast majority of students in New York State. They are the backbone of our communities. We urge you to consider the following:

School Meals: Congress must reject any and all proposals that would reduce federal support for school meals. Currently in New York State, schools participating in the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program receive full funding through a combination of state and federal dollars to provide breakfast and lunch to all of their students, without the hassle of individual form collection. School cafeteria staff have lauded this program for both its administrative ease, as well as increased meal participation among students. The program has been proven to reduce student hunger and eliminate the stigma some students face of not being able to afford their meals. A recent proposal from the House Ways and Means Committee to raise the CEP threshold from 25% to 60% would impact nearly 1,800 schools and over 900,000 students in the state.

A second proposal would require non-CEP participating schools to collect income verification documentation in addition to the already required free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL) applications for every student who may be eligible for school meal assistance. School districts have long struggled to collect FRPL applications from students, resulting in a vast undercount of eligible students. The results of increased administrative requirements would have multiple negative effects on schools. Boggled down with double the paperwork, school food service employees would be forced to spend their time following up with parents who have not submitted the proper forms rather than focusing on school food procurement, cafeteria menus, and other tasks they were hired to do. Furthermore, students who would qualify for free meals but are denied due to lack of written proof will not be able to afford their meals resulting in an accrual of school meal debt. School meal debt must be zeroed out in the same year it is accrued, and oftentimes that means school districts must move funding away from academic services and programming to pay off debt.

Medicaid and SNAP: Public school districts have access to Medicaid funding for services provided to students with disabilities that are medically necessary and/or included in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Any federal changes that could result in a loss in Medicaid enrollment could directly impact schools providing students with needed supports. Furthermore, enrollment in free school meal programs is driven largely by direct certification of students whose families receive Medicaid and/or SNAP benefits. Any reduction in either of these critical federal programs would also have a direct impact on school meal programs.

Title I: School districts rely on Title I funding to support the neediest and most disadvantaged students in their charge. Supporting and bolstering this funding stream is necessary for school leaders to appropriately serve students and help them keep up with academic learning standards, as well as other external challenges. Flexible

funding streams, such as Title I grants, are imperative to allow schools to make financial decisions based on their individual needs.

IDEA Funding: Ensuring students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate education is a legal requirement, as well as the right thing to do to help our most vulnerable students succeed. Statewide, nearly 500,000 students – or 19 percent of all students – are identified as students with disabilities. The federal government has been underfunding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) since it was first passed in the 1970s. Originally promising up to forty percent in funding, the federal share has been far below that number, historically around or below fifteen percent. This means states and local school districts are providing not only their portion, but also the shortfall in the federal obligation. Congress must begin the important path to fully funding IDEA at the levels promised when this landmark legislation was first passed. To ensure school districts have the financial support required to meet the needs of students with disabilities and take steps to address special education teacher shortages, Congress must provide substantial increases to IDEA funding.

Career and Technical Education: School district and BOCES Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs have proven highly effective in helping provide students with the essential skills they require to successfully transition to college and career. The growth in popularity of such programs reflects their success. This year, New York was allocated just under \$65 million from the Perkins Act to bolster CTE programs. These programs grow student interest and provide a worthy path to successful employment for tens of thousands of students. Congress must maintain strong investments in career and technical education.

State and Local Tax Deduction: The State and Local Tax (SALT) Deduction is a key source of relief for taxpayers and municipalities alike. SALT-D prevents double taxation by allowing taxpayers to claim a deduction for the state and local taxes they have already paid from their income. It is critical that Congress restore full SALT deductibility and eliminate the \$10,000 cap. New York has been one of the states hit hardest by the SALT cap. The limits imposed on the SALT deduction place education and other vital public sector services at risk and effectively increases their after-tax cost to taxpayers.

The future of our economy, workforce and nation come from our public schools. We need to make sure we invest in that future so that the generations to come will be innovative, flexible and ready to take on the challenges of the next decade, and even the next century.

Thank you for your support for public schools.



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