



Summer 2020 Federal Talking Points

Federal Education Investments

- Additional investment of \$205 billion for K-12 education
 - \$175 billion directly to states
 - \$13 billion for IDEA
 - \$12 billion for Title I
 - \$5 billion to expand E-rate program

Medicaid

- Medicaid helps fund critical services districts provide students
 - Vision and hearing screenings
 - Occupational and speech therapy
 - Diabetes and asthma diagnosis and management
 - Mental health services
- Pandemic has spawned growing mental health needs
- NYS school districts currently receive over \$270 million in Medicaid funding each year
 - \$136 million of this funding is federal
- NYS has over 250 school-based health and mental health centers that rely heavily on Medicaid funding
- Over 2 million New Yorkers have filed for unemployment
 - New Medicaid enrollees could reach upwards of 1.2 million New Yorkers

School Nutrition

- School districts face increasing costs and decreasing revenues caused by the switch from cafeteria service to grab-and-go meal pick-up and delivery
 - Transportation costs, packaging costs, hazard pay for food service employees, loss of revenue from a la carte food items
- Appropriate \$3 billion in emergency funding for school nutrition programs (as was included in the HEROES Act)
- Suspend the implementation of USDA's broad-based categorical eligibility rule that would change SNAP eligibility in New York
 - Nationwide approximately 9% of current SNAP participants would lose benefits
 - In NYS, about 50,000 households with children would lose benefits
 - Children who lose SNAP could no longer be directly certified for free school meals

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

- Please support immediate legislative action to protect DACA recipients and to place childhood arrivals on a path to citizenship

- In June, the Supreme Court ruled that the process by which the Trump Administration moved to terminate DACA was illegal, but they did not rule on the legality of the program
- Children deserve to feel safe and secure in their schools

Broadband Access and E-Rate Funding

- Expand broadband so that all students in the state have access to high speed internet
- Increase E-rate funding by \$5 billion
- Expand E-rate eligible purchases to include Chromebooks and other means to provide home internet access to students

Support for Public Schools

- Ensure public schools are prioritized in stimulus funding packages
- Private schools were eligible to receive forgivable loans through the Paycheck Protection Program for payroll expenses, interest on mortgages, rent and utilities
 - Please ensure that any future funding available to private schools is also available to public schools



School Funding

New York State is facing the bleakest economic outlook since the Great Depression. Our school leaders are confronting a dim reality of budget cuts amidst new and increasing needs and unknown factors relating to the reopening of schools. It is not yet known how deeply school districts will be impacted by the economic downturn. The state has suggested cuts to school aid are likely to be in the billions.

Meanwhile, the ability for individual districts to meet the challenges brought on by the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, pandemic is uneven, based on a variety of circumstances – from geography to district wealth to student need. Fomenting the stress caused by the pandemic, our nation is facing a call to action to ensure that all of our children grow up in a world filled with opportunity and justice, rather than hostility and fear. Education equity must be prioritized now more than ever before.

NYSSBA urges Congress to provide an additional **\$13 billion for IDEA** (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and **\$12 billion for Title I** funding. School closures have widened existing achievement gaps and it is our neediest students who will require additional supports to catch up to their classmates and make up for periods of interrupted learning.

NYSSBA also requests a more broad investment of at least **\$175 billion for K-12 education** at the state level. In order to comply with state and federal health and safety guidelines, local school districts will need to make significant financial investments during a time when budgets are extremely tight. Compound that with the cost of compensatory services and other additional academic services that will be necessary to counterbalance lost class time. Without this funding, schools will be unable to provide adequate services to reopen their classrooms.

Finally, NYSSBA calls for a **\$5 billion increase to the E-rate program**, which would disseminate funds to schools and libraries for the purchase of Wi-Fi hotspots, modems, routers, connected devices and advanced information and technology services.

For additional information, please contact NYSSBA Governmental Relations at 518-783-0200.



Student Health and Mental Health

Managing a school in the 21st century has expanded much beyond meeting the academic needs of students. In order to be successful, children need to be healthy, both mentally and physically. Over the course of the last decade, school district leaders have increasingly provided school based health and mental health services, as well as other community based programs. Although physical school buildings have been closed since March, schools continue to provide a plethora of nonacademic services either virtually or by means of complex, costly delivery services.

New York school districts currently receive more than \$270 million in Medicaid funding each year, \$136 million of which is funded federally. These funds help school districts provide critical health services to children, including vision and hearing screenings, psychological services, occupational and speech therapy, as well as diabetes and asthma diagnosis and management. Medicaid funding also helps offset costs for medically necessary services and equipment provided to children under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Additionally, New York has over 250 approved and operating school-based health centers that rely heavily on Medicaid funding to remain solvent. The services these centers offer not only improve students' overall health and mental health; they also lead to fewer absences and improved academic performance. These centers will be even more critical when schools reopen. Not only have many routine healthcare visits been put on pause; districts will have to respond to more critical mental health needs. Anxiety, depression and suicide rates were on the rise before schools closed. Now, additional factors must be added in, including social isolation, anxiety caused by the pandemic and grief over the death of family members. Funding for school based centers is linked to the number of Medicaid eligible students enrolled.

The recession caused by the current pandemic has resulted in job loss for over a million New Yorkers, many who have become newly eligible to receive Medicaid benefits. The Urban Institute of Georgetown University projected the increase could reach as high as 1.2 million Medicaid enrollees in New York alone. Another study found that 5.4 million Americans lost their health insurance between February and May due COVID-19. Funding must be sufficient at both the state and federal levels to ensure school districts are able to offer health and mental health services to all students in need.

For additional information, please contact NYSSBA Governmental Relations at 518-783-0200.



School Nutrition

Shortly after New York announced the closure of schools, district leaders were required to submit plans detailing how meals would be delivered to students. Our school districts have gone above and beyond to ensure students across the state have access to nutritious breakfasts, lunches, and sometimes even dinners during this time of transition from cafeteria service to grab-and-go meal pick-up and delivery models.

Many districts are providing more meals and services than those for which they are being reimbursed. The New York City Department of Education is partnering with the food platform DoorDash to deliver meals to hundreds of medically fragile students across the city. Nearly all school districts have set up grab-and-go meal pick-up locations. Many districts offer school bus meal delivery service. Districts around the state have also teamed up with local food banks in order to streamline community-wide food delivery efforts.

During these challenging times, school food authorities are experiencing budget shortfalls for a number of reasons including transportation costs of delivery services, increased costs due to packaging, provision of hazard pay for food service employees and loss of anticipated revenue from a la carte food items.

School meal reimbursements must be raised so districts are not forced to dip into their general funds in order to fill deficits in their school lunch funds. The HEROES Act included \$3 billion in emergency funding to help child nutrition programs cover costs associated with grab-and-go meal pick-up and delivery. NYSSBA urges Congress to make that funding available to school districts nationwide.

Additionally, the HEROES Act included a number of provisions to expand the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), including suspension of administrative rule changes that would cut SNAP benefits. NYSSBA recommends suspending the implementation of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) proposal to revise broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) and greatly reduce the number of participants who are currently eligible to receive SNAP benefits.

The Administration had estimated that approximately 9% of current SNAP participants would lose their benefits as a result of the BBCE rule. It is also estimated that in New York State alone just under 50,000 households with children would lose their benefits. Students who receive SNAP benefits are directly certified to receive free school meals through the National School Lunch Program. The USDA's analysis cited that nationwide "the number of impacted children shows that potentially as many as 982,000 children would no longer be directly certified for free school meals based on SNAP participation." The implementation of the BBCE rule will result in decreased access to nutritional foods for certain students and an increase in costs to a number of school districts.

For additional information, please contact NYSSBA Governmental Relations at 518-783-0200.

Memorandum of SUPPORT

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

The New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) supports the passage of legislation that would protect the legal status of individuals who currently participate in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and ensure that they are on a path to citizenship. NYSSBA also supports access to public education for all students, regardless of background, housing situation or immigration status.

School districts have a clear obligation to all students to provide them with access to a free, appropriate public education. In fact, the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Plyler v. Doe* holds that states cannot constitutionally deny students a free public education on account of their immigration status. When a child presents him or herself for enrollment, we enroll and educate that child. Questions about district residency are addressed later. Questions about citizenship and immigration status are not asked at all.

Since its establishment in 2012, DACA has provided a framework for families, communities and school districts to uniformly understand the rights and responsibilities of the students protected by this program. According to the Migration Policy Institute, New York State is home to nearly 33,000 DACA recipients. Of these individuals, 14% are enrolled in K-12 schools and 25% in colleges. Over 1,300 are educators in New York alone.

In June, the Supreme Court ruled that the process by which the Trump Administration moved to terminate the DACA program was illegal. The decision allows for the protection of many students, faculty and staff for the immediate future. However, while the Court ruled that the process used by the Trump Administration to end the program was wrong, they did not rule on the legality of the program. Without immediate congressional action that would inscribe this program into law, fear and anxiety will continue and have adverse effects on both the mental and physical health of hundreds of thousands of individuals. One study showed that after DACA was implemented, there was a surge in enrollment of kids 5 and younger born to parents with DACA status in the national Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children benefit program. Many of these U.S. born children are now in our schools. Teaching physically and emotionally healthy children not only warrants higher rates of success throughout those students' academic careers; it is also more financially viable for school districts. Reacting to physical and mental distress later in life is more costly than preparing children for a healthy life from the start.

Congress must act now and alleviate the anxiety and disruption that has been caused. Please take formal legislative action to protect the legal status of DACA recipients and provide them with a path to citizenship.

For these reasons, NYSSBA strongly supports legislation to protect the legal status of individuals who currently participate in the DACA program, and ensure that they are on a path to citizenship. For additional information, please contact NYSSBA Governmental Relations at 518-783-0200.



Access to Technology

The COVID-19 pandemic forced public schools across the state to make a dramatic shift from classroom to virtual instruction. Our world today is very different from the one we knew just 15 years ago. School districts have been faced with unique challenges and have responded to the pressure with integrity and determination. However, the ability for individual districts to meet these challenges is uneven, based on a variety of circumstances – from geography to district wealth to student need. And it is simply unrealistic to assume this is the last challenge districts will face.

There are countless reasons why school districts may choose to move classes online. A global pandemic is just one. Many rural districts struggle to provide competitive course offerings to their students. Expanding students' options to include an array of online courses could open them up to a world of opportunities. Online learning can also promote collaboration. Students throughout New York could partner with each other to research the next breakthrough in medical science; foreign language students could build lasting relationships with their peers internationally.

Alternatively, students may be forced to rely more heavily on the internet and virtual access to classroom resources. For example, social distancing orders prevent libraries from lending books. They may, however, lend electronic resources. Meanwhile, classes and homework are becoming increasingly digitized. According to a recent U.S. Census Bureau survey, around 1 in 10 of the poorest children in the United States has little or no access to technology for learning. In addition, the data show that children's access to online learning is strongly correlated with race. It is more important than ever that the state and federal government expand access to technology to bridge the digital divide that outlines geographic and socioeconomic disparities.

First, broadband must be expanded so that students in rural New York are granted the opportunity to access high-speed internet. There cannot be true equity in our education system when certain students are forced to bring their Chromebooks to parking lots to do a day's worth of homework in a car, while other students sit behind desks in their rooms free of distraction.

Secondly, a multi-billion dollar increase to the federal E-rate program would secure funding necessary for schools and libraries to support distance and remote learning for students without proper broadband access at home. NYSSBA calls for a \$5 billion increase to the E-rate program, which would disseminate funds to schools and libraries for the purchase of Wi-Fi hotspots, modems, routers, connected devices and advanced information and technology services.

Finally, NYSSBA asks that the Federal Communications Commission allows E-rate funding to be used to provide home internet access to students.

NYSSBA strongly supports consideration of the aforementioned recommendations. For additional information, please contact NYSSBA Governmental Relations at 518-783-0200.