

March 2, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As organizations working with children and families in New York City, **we urge you to ensure schools get their full COVID-19 federal relief funding and that federal funding supplements, and does not supplant, state funding.** The current Executive budget proposal would cut more than \$700 million in state funding to NYC schools, potentially requiring NYC to use its federal COVID-19 education relief funding to cover regular day-to-day expenses instead of using it for the essential purposes intended by Congress of reopening schools and counteracting the unprecedented learning loss students have experienced. Without substantial state and federal support, the devastating impacts of this pandemic will plague the children of New York City with lifelong consequences.

Students across New York City have fallen behind academically due to school closures and the inadequacies of remote learning. School closures have led to countless hours of missed instructional time and have disproportionately impacted students from low-income communities of color and other historically marginalized populations, further exacerbating inequities in our schools. Many students have had limited access to remote learning due to lack of devices, internet connectivity, or the digital literacy and adult support necessary to participate fully in school from home. Students living in homeless shelters or overcrowded apartments have faced the added barrier of lacking a quiet place to learn and study. Students have also been called upon to take care of younger siblings, to care for ill parents or relatives, and to work to help their families during this period of economic hardship. Remote learning has been particularly inaccessible and ineffective for students with disabilities and English Language Learners who have not received the services and supports they need to succeed in school.

School districts need their full COVID-19 federal relief funding in order to meet students' immense and varied needs while working to reopen schools and keep school communities safe. Funding is necessary to address the learning loss and trauma students have experienced with targeted, evidence-based instructional and social-emotional approaches. Students must be supported in completing missed work in order to earn course credits. Students who would normally be forced to age out of school because they have turned 21 need the opportunity to return to school next year in order to complete graduation requirements and receive transition services. Compensatory services are needed to remedy the inability of schools to provide legally mandated special education instruction and services for students with disabilities, and English Language Learners need specialized support to make up for the mandated bilingual or English as a New Language instruction they missed.

Under the current budget proposal, New York City schools would lose more than \$700 million dollars in state funding. For example, the state budget proposes a consolidation of eleven

expense-based aid categories, including transportation, into a new “Services Aid” block grant and capping and cutting state funding for these expenses by hundreds of millions of dollars in New York City. These state cuts would force the City to use federal COVID-19 relief funds approved by Congress in December 2020 to cover the gap left by the State instead of using this funding for the purposes Congress intended of safely reopening schools and helping students catch up. This proposal to supplant federal funding in this year’s budget is particularly concerning because the State already offset the federal education funds from the CARES Act with identically sized cuts to the State’s education budget in last year’s state budget, meaning that New York City did not receive any additional education funding as a result of the federal relief bill passed last spring.

Even in difficult economic times, it is imperative that we invest in our children, our best hope for a brighter future. We strongly urge you to affirm your commitment to the youth of New York City by ensuring schools have full access to the federal COVID-19 education relief funding and those funds are not used to replace state support to schools.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Children of New York

AHRC New York City

Alliance for Quality Education

Amber Charter Schools

America On Tech

Barrier Free Living

Beam Center

Brooklyn Defender Services

CAMBA

CareerWise New York

CASA-NYC

Catholic Guardian Services

Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

Children's Defense Fund-NY

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Citywide Council for District 75
Citywide Council on Special Education
Class Size Matters
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)
College Prep Academy Metro Center
Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)
Community Education Council for District 16
Community Inclusion & Development Alliance Inc
Cooke School and Institute
Disability Rights New York
Educators for Excellence-New York
El Puente
Eskolta School Research and Design
Fill in the GAP
Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project
Gateway Housing
Goddard Riverside
Good Shepherd Services
Graham Windham
HeartShare St. Vincent's Services
Henry Street Settlement
HERE to HERE

Hispanic Federation
Hunts Point Alliance for Children
Immigrant Social Services, Inc (ISS)
IntegrateNYC
Internationals Network for Public Schools
JobsFirstNYC
Kennedy Children's Center
Lawyers for Children, Inc.
Liberation HS
MercyFirst
Metropolitan Parent Center, Sinergia Inc.
New Alternatives for Children
New York Center for Child Development
New York Immigration Coalition
NYS TESOL
NYSATA
NYU Education Advocacy Clinic
NYU Family Defense Clinic
OPIN
Parents Supporting Parents NY
Proteger la Educación Especial de NYC
Read Alliance
Safe Horizon

Settlement Housing Fund
Sheltering Arms
Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation
Special Support Services
Teachers College REACH Program
The Children's Law Center
The Day Care Council
The Opportunity Network
The Partnership for the Homeless
The Right to Read Project
United Neighborhood Houses
United Way of New York City
United We Stand of New York
Volunteers of America - Greater New York
Young Invincibles
Zone 126