



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Response to Governor Hochul's Executive Budget Address

January 16, 2024 (NEW YORK CITY) — *In response to the education portion of Governor Hochul's Executive Budget address, Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement:*

Improving reading instruction and expanding access to mental healthcare would move our schools forward in important ways, and we are glad to see Governor Hochul elevate these issues for New York students. But we are concerned the State may take a big step *backwards* if the Governor and Legislature do not make a more substantial investment to support school districts that have funded essential programs with federal COVID-19 stimulus dollars expiring this year.

School districts are currently using this soon-to-expire funding to address needs that existed long before the pandemic and are not going away—including programs advancing literacy and mental health. New York City alone is spending around \$1 billion per year in expiring federal funding to pay for 450 school social workers, 3-K expansion, legally mandated preschool special education programs, 75 shelter-based community coordinators, community schools, 60 psychologists, bilingual programming, literacy initiatives, and more.

While we appreciate that the Governor is proposing to increase overall education funding, this moment in time demands more. At a time when we have a youth mental health crisis, record-high student homelessness, high rates of illiteracy, and an increase in newly arrived immigrant students enrolling in our schools, we cannot afford to lose the important programs launched or expanded with expiring federal funding, especially those programs serving the students who need the most support.

This fall, more than [160 organizations issued a call-to-action](#) noting: “We are at a critical juncture. Our elected leaders must choose between allowing these programs to end on their watch—dealing a massive setback to public education—or taking action to identify new funding sources so students can continue receiving critical supports and services. We are counting on

our elected leaders to sustain essential education programs and build on the progress made, leaving a lasting impact on the lives of students for years to come.”

As we review the details of Governor Hochul’s budget proposal, one thing is clear: Governor Hochul and the State Legislature must make a more substantial investment to help school districts sustain important education programs as their federal stimulus funding expires.

About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)

Since 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are at greatest risk for failure or discrimination in school because of their poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. AFC uses four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation for families of students; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and compel needed reform.