



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

News Release

For immediate release

Contact: Isabella Rieke, *Senior Communications Manager* • 646-871-6739 • irieke@afcnyc.org

Response to Governor Hochul's 2025 State of the State Address

January 14, 2025 (NEW YORK CITY) — *Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement in response to Governor Hochul's State of the State address:*

We appreciate that Governor Hochul has continued to advance initiatives to support students, including through attention in recent years to literacy and youth mental health. Ensuring all students can read, get the mental health services they need, and get the tailored support needed to succeed in school requires continuing leadership and commitment from the State, including the allocation of sufficient resources to enable school districts to do the hard work ahead. The Governor and the State Legislature took an important step in fully funding the Foundation Aid per pupil formula in 2023 for the first time. However, the next step is to update that formula, which was developed nearly two decades ago, to reflect the needs of today's students and rising costs.

The details of the forthcoming Executive Budget will be critical, as even small changes to the Foundation Aid formula could have a major impact on funding for New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) and school districts around the State. For example, one proposal for revising the poverty measure that was described in the state-funded study from the Rockefeller Institute would result in NYCPS receiving an estimated \$392 million less than it otherwise would. The Rockefeller Institute's proposal for changing weights for English Language Learners would also result in less funding to NYCPS at a time when the State should be focused on providing more support to this population of students. As the Governor moves forward with specific proposals, it will be important to carefully assess their impact on schools and students, including by modeling the financial impact of the package of changes proposed.

With more than 146,000 students in NYC schools experiencing homelessness last year, it is time for the State to add a weight to the Foundation Aid formula for students who are homeless and students in foster care to help schools address the unique barriers they face.

With the move toward universal school meals, the State should adopt the Rockefeller Institute proposal to use data on economic disadvantage rather than the narrow and flawed metric of eligibility for free/reduced-price lunch to allocate support to districts serving low-income students.

As the Governor and Legislature focus on affordability, it is important to update the formula's Regional Cost Index, which is supposed to account for variation in wages in different parts of the State but has not been updated since 2006.

We look forward to working with state leaders to ensure the formula meets the needs of today's schools and students, with a particular focus on students who need the most support.

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.