



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 FY 2026 Executive Budget

January 21, 2025 (NEW YORK CITY) — *Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement in response to the release of Governor Hochul's FY 2026 Executive Budget proposal:*

In 2023, Governor Hochul and the State Legislature took an important step by fully funding the Foundation Aid formula for the first time. However, while updates to the formula itself are sorely needed, the proposals announced today could result in New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) receiving less funding from Albany to meet the needs of low-income students.

We agree with the Governor's proposal to replace the flawed "free and reduced-price lunch" metric with a broader measure of "economically disadvantaged students" that will more accurately capture the number of low-income students. However, we are concerned about the proposed change to the poverty metric, as this change will not accurately reflect the needs of districts like NYCPS.

While we agree with the Governor that New York should stop measuring student need using poverty data from the 2000 Census, the state-funded Rockefeller Institute study indicated that changing the poverty measure to the most recent three-year average Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), absent other changes, would result in a projected decrease of \$392 million for New York City schools. Even when combined with the proposal to replace "free and reduced-price lunch" with the broader category of "economically disadvantaged students," there would still be less funding for New York City schools to meet the needs of low-income students than they would otherwise receive.

The current federal poverty threshold for a family of four is just \$32,150. Trying to make ends meet on \$30,000 means something very different for a family in New York City than elsewhere in the State, which is why the Foundation Aid formula must include additional metrics to account for the significant and multifaceted needs of schools and students in low-income communities. With more than 146,000 students in New York City experiencing homelessness last year, we urge 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. In addition, the State should update the

Regional Cost Index, which is supposed to help account for statewide variation but is more than 15 years out of date. More than 120 organizations have recommended these and other key changes to the formula, available [online](#).

Strong public schools are critical to making New York an affordable place to raise a family. Without additional changes to the Foundation Aid formula, the Governor's proposals could adversely affect the quality of life for New York City families. We look forward to working with state leaders to improve the formula this year and to ensure an ongoing process for reviewing and revising the formula in years to come.

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.