

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE BOARD



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PRESS RELEASE

Education Groups Oppose Cuts to Education

Cuts would devastate schools and students in extraordinary times

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November 12, 2020 (Albany, NY) – Today, the NYS Educational Conference Board (ECB), a group comprised of parents, teachers, and school leaders called on state policy makers to support schools, and oppose any cuts to state aid for schools. The 20% reduction in state aid that schools have been warned about for months as a state budget gap closing measure for the current year (2020-21) would have enormous consequences for students, communities and the economy - and no matter how it's distributed, a 20% state aid loss is untenable.

Please view the full ECB Paper here: <https://nyspta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ECB-State-Aid-Factsheet-Fall-2020-v5.pdf>

"In these unprecedented times, schools need more support, not less," offered ECB chair John Yagelski. "Over the past months schools have supported families, teachers, staff and communities in astounding ways, and now is the time for our state policy makers to support them back."

Highlights of the paper detail that:

- The enacted state budget already reduced state support for schools for 2020-21 by \$1.1 billion through the Pandemic Adjustment;
- A 20% state aid cut represents a \$5.2 billion loss of funding. No matter how such a reduction is distributed, it would be devastating for schools;
- A 20% reduction in state aid is roughly double the size of any other state aid cut in history;
- Mid-year cuts are especially disruptive to students and districts' fiscal stability; and
- A reduction of 20% of state aid would bring the state's share of school funding to a historic low.

"Under normal circumstances, right now we'd be preparing to tell our elected representatives how much additional funding our students require in the upcoming state budget to continue to thrive," said NYSSBA Executive Director Robert Schneider. "This year, we find ourselves having to impress upon state officials just how devastating an impact a mid-year aid cut would have on schools."

A 20% state aid cut would bring the state's share of school funding to a historic low. ECB estimates that if a 20% reduction to all state-funded programs to schools were to occur, this would fall to 30%, which is lower than any year since 1940 when this was first recorded.

“The pandemic has shown us one thing; our schools can do amazing things for children in our most difficult times of need. From transforming into immediate online instruction, to find ways to feed our 2.6 million public school children overnight, our schools lead the way. Now, we must support them. Our children cannot withstand any cuts to programs or services. Cuts to school aid would have an everlasting effect on their learning – and we simply cannot allow that,” added Kyle Belokopitsky, NYS PTA Executive Director.

Jennifer Pyle, Executive Director of the Conference of Big 5 School Districts added, “School districts across New York State continue to work tirelessly to provide continuity of academic instruction and to serve the unique needs of their communities during these unprecedented and difficult times. A reduction in school aid would be devastating to these efforts in the state’s urban centers as they have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic, are heavily reliant on state aid for education and serve the majority of the state’s most vulnerable students. It is imperative that the state ensure that all school districts have the resources required to serve the needs of all children.”

“There is just no way that School Aid can be cut by 20%, and not in the middle of the school year. A straight 20% reduction from every district would be devastating to schools serving our poorest communities. A more targeted cut would still damage every district. This is not a normal year, either—schools have had to absorb extraordinary costs to reopen safely. The 98.4% passage rate for school budgets last June showed that the public recognizes the contributions their schools have been making. To keep meeting the needs of students and families, schools need continued funding,” offered Charles Dedrick, NYSCOSS Executive Director.

“School districts across the state have been contending with unprecedented challenges and increased operating costs due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A 20 percent reduction in state aid would pose an existential threat to the New York State public education system. We have a constitutional obligation to provide education to all of our students, and we must reject any policy which would prevent us from doing so,” offered Amanda Wing, Interim Executive Director of ASBO.

“This is simple: Devastating cuts to state aid will lead to a reprehensible loss of opportunities for students. Period,” NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said. “It’s time to refocus on federal stimulus funding and state revenues that can help cover the budget gap and stop deep cuts to public schools. The alternative simply isn’t acceptable for students, educators and families alike.”

“Building level administrators and programs leaders work tirelessly to provide instruction and support to students, staff and the community at large during this critical pandemic period. Since March they have risked their own health and worked non-stop to ensure the wellbeing of students and staff. These are serious times and we must provide schools and their leaders with needed resources. We understand fully the economic crisis facing this state, but more fully understand that we must find a way to sustain schools,” added Kevin Casey, Executive Director of SAANYS.

ECB members recognize the toll that COVID-19 has taken on the state finances and the challenges this has created. Yet, if we are to keep our public education system intact and meet student needs, a 20% reduction in state aid, no matter how it is structured, cannot occur. Circumstances may preclude avoiding an aid reduction, but if this is the case, it must be considerably less than 20% and carefully account for the impact on all districts. In any scenario, significant and sustained federal funding is necessary. Otherwise, we risk catastrophe for a generation of students and the schools they attend.

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The New York State Educational Conference Board is comprised of the Conference of Big 5 School Districts; the New York State Council of School Superintendents; New York State PTA; the New York State School Boards Association; New York State United Teachers; the School Administrators Association of New York State; and the Association of School Business Officials of New York.