

7 Ways You Can Help Our Schools

1. **Decouple Foundation Aid and Expense Driven Aid**

The proposed changes to state aid show misleading funding amounts. What appear to be increases in funding are actually flat, and in some cases, decreases in overall funding. Including Expense Driven Aid in Foundation Aid also discourages collaboration and shared services with BOCES and includes unfunded mandates in capital and transportation. Allow expensed based aids to flow as normal (this is a no additional money proposal). Allowing expensed based aids such as high cost aid and BOCES aid to be put into the foundation aid as proposed makes it difficult for districts to budget year to year. Additionally the changes proposed to capital and transportation aid would amount to unfunded mandates.

2. **Increase Pension Cap to \$60,000 for Retired Police Officers Serving as School Resource Officers**

Increasing the retiree earning limit for retired police officers to serve as school resource officers would help districts attract qualified and experienced individuals to serve in these important roles. It would also give school districts flexibility for how these positions are paid.

3. **Increase Pension Cap for Retired Educators to \$50,000**

Increasing the retiree earning limit for retired educators would help districts fill vacancies with talented and experienced educators, especially for part-time and other hard to fill positions. This would help districts save money because these employees already have health insurance through their pensions. This would have an additional benefit by allowing for more retirees to be eligible to drive school buses.

4. **Reduce State Restrictions to Provide Greater Access to Mental Health Services for Students**

Work with NYSED, NYS Department of Health and Office of Mental Health to remove barriers for providing mental health services to students. Innovative and helpful programs are being delayed by current regulations and restrictions.

5. **Add Additional School Bus Driver Road Test Site in Capital Region**

The closest testing sites for bus drivers to obtain their CDL licenses are Amsterdam, Queensbury and Schodack. This creates another obstacle for our schools to hire bus drivers, which are all experiencing shortages.

6. **Evaluate Tax Cap Formula**

We agree that the 2% Tax Cap has been beneficial to our local taxpayers, however, we need the calculations within the Tax Cap formula to be re-evaluated (e.g., include PILOTs in the tax base growth factor) to make it more predictable for our budgeting.

7. **Authorize School Districts to Decline Designation of a School as a Polling Place**

The use of school buildings as polling places is concerning for many school districts. On voting days, members of the public may have unfettered access to school buildings and their students, which compromises safety and causes disruptions to academic programs. The state should give school districts the right to refuse the designation as a polling place.