



THE ISSUE

Gov. Andrew Cuomo's proposed budget for 2015-2016 lays out a punishing anti-public education agenda that attacks teachers and hurts students.

Rather than provide what all kids need, the governor is pushing a Billionaires' Agenda that would decimate the state's public schools. His "my-way-or-the-highway" budget would:

- hold school aid increases hostage;
- woefully underfund the state's K-12 and higher education systems;
- more than double the weight of standardized tests;
- make permanent an undemocratic tax cap that has wreaked financial havoc on school communities;
- eliminate funding for teacher training;
- launch a back-door voucher plan that would siphon funding away from schools most in need;
- underfund public higher education by tying funding to campus "performance" rather than enrollment;
- smooth the way for the privatization of SUNY's five hospitals;
- destroy prep programs for future teachers;
- and fail to fully address the student debt crisis.

Simply put, Gov. Cuomo's proposed budget - which serves the interests of his billionaire backers - is an attack on public education that fails to address what all students need.

WHERE WE STAND

The governor's proposed school-aid increase falls far short of providing the resources all kids need.

The governor's proposed \$1.1 billion increase in school aid falls far short of the \$2 billion requested by the state Board of Regents - and comes with major strings attached. He refuses to provide information on how it would be allocated to school districts. And he insists a funding increase for schools will happen only if he gets his way on proposals to erode local control, scapegoat teachers and more than double the weight of standardized tests.

Cuomo's woefully inadequate funding increase would perpetuate the inequity in school funding that has only worsened since he took office in 2008. The fact is: Half of the state's school districts today have less state aid than in 2008. The state is also some \$4 billion behind in funding high-needs districts as required by the landmark Campaign for Fiscal Equity court decision.

Nearly 1 million children in New York state live in poverty. Rather than provide the resources necessary to help all kids succeed, the governor has chosen instead to shortchange our students attending schools with the greatest need.

Attaching strings to school aid holds students, teachers and communities hostage.

Gov. Cuomo - employing an unprecedented pressure tactic to force through his harmful Billionaires' Agenda - refuses to release school-aid runs until he gets his way. This political power play hurts students and threatens communities' abilities to plan school budgets.

The New York State Educational Conference Board notes that sharing information on state aid is not simply a state budget "tradition" - it is critical to the development of local school budgets for hundreds of districts across the state. Without projected aid runs, school districts cannot responsibly develop their budgets or adequately involve communities in the process. The governor's decision to hold school aid runs hostage adds chaos and dysfunction into a critically important process on which so much depends for students, schools and taxpayers.

Ignoring parents, teachers and a substantial body of research on testing, Gov. Cuomo's plan to more than double the weight of standardized tests would worsen over-testing and harm students.

Gov. Cuomo, in pushing to expand the weight of standardized test scores, ignores the clear message from parents and teachers that schools should emphasize teaching, not testing. Basing 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation on standardized test scores is in direct contradiction to research and would only exacerbate test prep pressure and stress. His proposals taken as a whole would add bureaucracy and red tape, increase costs, diminish local control and undercut what should be a primary goal: recruiting and retaining great teachers.

New York state - and especially its public schools - cannot afford a giveaway to the wealthy.

Gov. Cuomo is once again proposing a tax credit to enrich those who make contributions to charter and private schools - a plan that would siphon \$100 million annually from the state's already underfunded public schools. Rather than address poverty by properly and equitably funding our poorest schools, the governor - through his push for an education tax credit - is creating a tax loop hole for his billionaire friends.

A permanent tax cap would cause permanent harm to public education.

School districts statewide have been struggling for years with inadequate levels of state aid. Those struggles have been exacerbated by the fiscal constraints caused by passage of the state's undemocratic tax cap. The tax cap erodes communities' ability to provide what all kids need. Making the tax cap permanent, which the governor is pushing to do, would prolong the financial hardships districts already face. The tax cap severely hampers a community's ability to set its own educational priorities.

Teachers should be supported, not attacked.

Gov. Cuomo is relentless in his attack on teachers, wrongly blaming them for every problem in public schools today.

At a time when teachers are facing new Common Core requirements and excessive testing, they should be supported with quality professional learning opportunities. Teacher Centers across the state provide critical professional development and training to educators. Yet, rather than provide the resources needed to keep Teacher Centers open, Gov. Cuomo has proposed eliminating their funding altogether.

New York state should be dedicated to recruiting and retaining great teachers - not scapegoating and attacking them.

New York state must stop neglecting its higher education system.

The governor's anti-public education agenda isn't limited to K-12. Gov. Cuomo also continues the long track record of neglect of New York state's higher education system. Not only would his proposed budget woefully underfund the state's SUNY, CUNY and community college campuses, he would mandate a skewed corporate style competition for funds, endangering student access and campus autonomy.

The governor's budget would decimate teacher-prep programs at SUNY and CUNY. And, in keeping with his desire to keep his billionaire supporters happy, he would allow private equity firms to own and operate hospitals, setting the stage for privatization of SUNY hospitals.

CONCLUSION

Gov. Cuomo's agenda of standardized testing, teacher scapegoating and underfunding ignores what all kids need: fair and equitable funding that ensures every child has a quality education and the opportunity to succeed.



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