



**City School District of Albany
2020-21 Legislative Priorities
Equitable Foundation Aid Funding**

New York has made progress in recent years improving the equitable distribution of state aid to school districts. The focus that Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature have placed on providing additional fiscal assistance to high-needs school districts like the City School District of Albany is commendable – and the right thing to do for students and families statewide.

However, the Foundation Aid formula continues to be inequitable and, without significant reform, will continue to lead to disparities between districts. Our students present with unique challenges, and many fewer financial resources at home. To deliver equity, high-needs districts need the resources to provide the wrap-around services, small class sizes and support staff our students need to succeed. We urge our state leaders to continue to focus on equity both through the development of the 2020-21 budget, and by re-evaluating the Foundation Aid formula.

Equitably Fund High Needs Districts

We ask that you ensure that all school districts receive a minimum of 85% of what the formula indicates for 2020-21 and put in place a multi-year plan to equitably fund all districts based on student need.

Even with the state’s focus on high-needs school districts in recent years, Albany receives only about 75% of the funding that the Foundation Aid formula indicates we should receive. That missing 25% has meaningful impacts on our ability to provide needed services to our students without further burdening our property taxpayers.

As you can see in the table below, Albany receives only 45% of our annual funding via state aid, compared to higher percentages – significantly higher, in some cases – for other New York districts that serve similar student populations. Albany receives the fewest dollars of state aid per student of any of these similarly situated districts.

District	% Black and Hispanic students	% ENL students	% Special Ed students	2019-20 budget	% 2019-20 budget from state aid
Utica	45	18	15	\$ 186,156,977	81
Troy	48	3	17	\$ 114,174,990	59
Schenectady	52	5	18	\$ 230,057,271	61
Syracuse	63	19	20	\$ 466,768,500	78
Albany	64	11	13	\$ 260,355,146	45
Buffalo	66	18	23	\$ 927,400,000	85
Newburgh	76	15	16	\$ 282,444,842	58
Yonkers	77	13	18	\$ 628,450,499	56
Poughkeepsie	85	10	18	\$ 98,902,415	68
Rochester	86	15	21	\$ 931,299,075	70

Pay particular attention to the Capital City

As the Capital City, Albany should be an example of New York's excellence. But the City School District of Albany is challenged in two ways that make us unique and result in part from our role as host to state government:

- First, more than 60% of our city's property is tax-exempt. This means the remaining properties have to bear a high burden of tax impact. We appreciate the state's continued support of the City of Albany through the Capital City Aid, and ask that the state also recognize the impact on the city's school district.
- Second, in part because we are host to state government, we have been a center of charter school activity. This has resulted in our having one of the highest number and percentages of charter students in the state. As a result, our annual charter school costs exceed \$35 million.

Despite this, and despite our low state aid ratio, Albany has held the line on property taxes. Over the last six years we have had an average levy increase of only 0.88% per year, including two years with zero increases. Nonetheless, Albany's property taxes continue to be higher than suburban communities in our region. We are doing our part to bring property taxes in line, while delivering an excellent education to our high-needs population. We need the state's assistance to equitably finance the education our students need and deserve while keeping our tax burden reasonable so that the city can remain an attractive place to live and raise a family.

Other factors that impact Albany

Additional factors that are unique to our school district and present both fiscal and programmatic challenges are:

- **Raise the Age** – As the legislature seeks to review the Foundation Aid formula, we ask that you consider a new factor this year. The unintended consequences of the state's Raise the Age law have left districts like ours trying to provide significant additional resources for adequate academic, social-emotional and behavioral supports for 16- and 17-year-olds who would previously have been adjudicated as adults, and are now being supervised in the community and continuing to attend school. While we fully support raising the age of criminal responsibility to 18, we urge the state to provide school districts with additional funding to provide the critical supports these teen-agers need.
- **Significant ENL growth** – We have experienced significant growth in our city's refugee and immigrant population in recent years. Over a six-year period, our enrollment of students receiving English as a New Language (ENL) services grew by nearly 1,000 students. Our ENL enrollment today comprises 11% of our total student population.
- **Overall enrollment growth** – Our school district was among the state's fastest-growing school districts in New York from 2012-17, according to the State Education Department. During that period of time our enrollment grew by 16 percent, or approximately 1,300 students. While that growth has levelled off over the last two school years, particularly due to changes at the federal level regarding immigration, we have maintained that significantly higher student population while most districts in New York are experiencing decreases in enrollment.