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Helpful Talking Points for Use in Expressing Support of Your Children, Schools & Communities

Quality & Fairness of Public Education in NYS

- It's become an over-used Albany sound bite that NYS spends more money per pupil and gets "mediocre" results for the investment. It's a catchy phrase, but here is what you don't hear from those same folks in Albany:
 - That 76.4 percent of students who entered 9th grade in 2010 graduated on time with a diploma by June 2014...an increase from the prior year...and despite the challenges of abject poverty, ELL and the other significant economic and societal hurdles NYS urban schools face every day. (SED Report of 12/18/14)
 - You also don't hear that NYS has for years consistently ranked as among the worst states in the US when it comes to fairness in distributing state dollars to the children who need it most. A circumstance reinforced by a recent UCLA study that ranked NYS 50th - LAST - in public education racial and economic segregation in America.
 - There's also no context provided when NYS's \$20,000/pupil spending rate is used as an Albany sound bite. That's because there are many wealthy districts that spend a LOT MORE than \$20,000/per pupil — some districts actually going as high as \$40,000/pupil or more. (In 2012-13 one district spent over \$92,000/pupil, nine others exceeded \$41,000 and 46 more topped \$30,000.) This obviously skews the average higher and paints an inaccurate picture of how much the vast majority of NYS districts — like those in CNY SBA — actually spend...another fact that somehow gets lost in the presentation because it doesn't agree with the story someone is trying to sell.
- According to a new Sienna College poll, voters trust educators (61%) more than the Governor (18%) and the Legislature (8%) "to set education policy in the state."
- FACT - Some of the best schools in NYS are also ranked as the best schools in the world. Unfortunately, these schools are also among the wealthiest districts in NYS, which only emphasizes the need to make education aid distribution more fair and equitable.
- FACT - Broad research by education experts across the country reinforces the reality that educational outcomes are indeed influenced by the level of fiscal resources that support children — especially for children from poor and less-wealthy backgrounds. Money does matter. Here is a link to one recent study that tracked the results of educational funding from 1955 – 2011: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w20847>

What We Must Have from Albany in this Year's State Budget

- **The FULL repeal of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA)**
 - Since it was established in 2010, the GEA has deducted well over \$9 BILLION from state aid disbursements that every school district in NYS was legally entitled to receive. Another \$1 BILLION will be deducted in the 2015-16 state budget if nothing is done.

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- Over the five years the GEA has existed more than \$582 MILLION has been deducted from aid checks for the nearly 50 schools districts in the CNYSBA region. If GEA is fully eliminated in this year's state budget \$63,820,467 million will not be taken from our member districts.
- Here is a breakdown of the exact dollar amounts deducted from the composite CNYSBA school districts in each of our four BOCES since 2010:

OCM BOCES	\$341,595,516
Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES	\$ 80,552,607
CiTi (Oswego County BOCES)	\$ 93,850,607
TST BOCES	\$ 66,679,923

- What would our schools, communities and region have been able to do with these funds? Put fewer people out of jobs? Kept vital educational programs that help make our students as competitive for college placement and employment as any other students in NYS? Kept property taxes lower? Tell legislators specific stories about the impact of the GEA on your own students and district.
- If NYS now has a budget surplus, why is there a need for a Gap Elimination Adjustment? Isn't that just common sense?
- Most of the majority party in the state Senate - including Education Committee Chair John Flanagan, are on record as supporting the full elimination of the GEA in this year's budget. Ask your Senator where they stand. Do they support full GEA elimination this year? If they do, reaffirm your support of their efforts and strongly encourage them not to back off this stance as budget negotiations play out. They need to follow through on their commitment.

➤ **Demand that your legislators NOT divert state \$ that your district desperately needs to support charter schools — ESPECIALLY IF THERE ARE NO CHARTER SCHOOLS IN THEIR LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OR YOUR COMMUNITY**

- Despite all the hype, research is mixed on charter educational achievement with many studies concluding that results from charters are by-and-large the same as in real public schools. (see Education Week, March 27, 2014)
- Real public schools, unlike charters, are required to serve all children. To date charters enroll substantially fewer ELL and special education/special needs children than public schools.
- And, despite claims to the contrary, many charters have utilized a system known as “counseling out” to dismiss students who do not perform well enough academically, are disciplinary problems or have other special needs or circumstances. “Counseled out” students are sent back to public school. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/11/nyregion/charter-school-sends-message-thrive-or-transfer.html?pagewanted=all>)
- Every dollar that goes to charters in this year's state budget is a dollar that does not go to your public schools.

➤ **Call on your legislators to support the formation of a Qualified Non-Political Commission, Comprised Primarily of Education Finance Experts Charged with Developing Legislation for the Creation of A New and EQUITABLE Foundation Aid Formula for the 2015-16 STATE BUDGET.**

- School Boards should support this effort by passing and sending a resolution to your state legislators that can be found at: <http://www.statewideonline.org/wordpress/a-call-for-unity-and-a-call-for-action/>