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**January 15, 2016**

TO: CNYSBA School Board Members, Superintendents, Secretaries  
& District Clerks

## **State Budget Proposal Inadequate to Meet Public Education Needs**

"Woefully insufficient"..."lacking"..."ignores the tremendous inequities between rich and poor schools"..."falls short-far short"..."anemic". These quotes from news reports are representative of the general response from public education leaders and stakeholders across NYS to Governor Cuomo's proposed state Executive Budget.

While every statewide education organization, as well as the Board of Regents, made rational cases to add - this year - over \$2 billion of new state education aid to simply maintain the status quo, the Governor's plan provides only \$991 million in additional funding for fiscal 2016-17.

Among the provisions put forth, two are of critical concern to CNYSBA member school districts:

- Gap Elimination Adjustment: Rather than fully ending the GEA in this year's budget, the Governor instead chose to devote only \$189 million of the \$434 million in GEA left on the books - despite the fact that NYS has a sizable budget surplus. Without a complete end to GEA this year many of our lower to

average wealth districts will not obtain millions of dollars in badly needed funds that they are legally entitled to receive. Unless this wrong-headed and unfair proposal is reversed public schools will again be unjustly targeted for a deduction from their state aid checks to eliminate a NYS budget gap that no longer exists.

- Foundation Aid: The Executive Budget only calls for a meager 1.7 percent increase in Foundation Aid (\$266 million). This is important to all of our districts, but especially to our least wealthy districts who this year will be much more dependent on Foundation Aid to make ends meet.

And with the tax cap projected to be zero, even wealthy districts will be joining less wealthy and poor communities in looking for assistance to make up for what they can't raise through taxes.

Bottom line - this very puzzling and insufficient budget proposal would negatively impact all CNYSBA schools regardless of wealth...which means if we want to change this situation we are going to have work for it. And that means conveying the impacts of this proposal on your children, district and community to your state Senators and Assembly Members.

CNYSBA will be with you every step of the way in this fight. Over the next several weeks you will be hearing from us often with news and updates on budget developments.

We will also again convene our Advocacy Community Forums in early February (see details below). As in the past, Dr. Rick Timbs will provide data and perspectives on how the budget proposal will directly impact your own district. We will also again supply attendees with talking points, data backgrounders and other tools to use with your state legislators.

While our challenges are formidable, let's remember that through the advocacy work you and your communities have done, we have been able to move the needle over the past few budget cycles...and we will do it again this year!

As always, don't hesitate to contact us directly with your questions and concerns.

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