

March 26, 2018

Senator Majority Leader Flanagan, Assembly Speaker Heastie, Senate Coalition Leader Klein, Assembly Member Nolan, and Senator Marcellino,

We are individual and organizational members of the ARISE Coalition, a group of parents, advocates, educators, academics and other stakeholders working to support students with disabilities and learning differences and their families in New York City. Our goal is to ensure positive day-to-day experiences and long-term outcomes for those students. We strongly believe that public education must be funded equitably. We thank the New York state leaders in the legislature who rejected the proposal to reduce funding for Summer Special Education students.

In the coming week, you will be deciding on the state budget. The Governor's budget proposes to change the reimbursement formula for Summer Special Education students who are not educated in schools for the deaf or blind and to make it equal to the state sharing ratio of high cost aid for students. Our students cannot afford funding cuts – especially not the students with disabilities in programs specifically targeted by this proposal – those most at risk of regression over the summer months. Summer services are mandated under State law for this vulnerable population for good reason and must be protected.

We appreciate the Legislature's support for students with disabilities and everything done thus far in protecting this critical funding. As negotiations continue, we ask for your continued support for these students and to continue to oppose these devastating cuts.

For background, in New York City there are a total of 4,408 programs that provide summer services to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who need them the most throughout the academic year and are likely to regress if they don't continue to receive special education services over the summer. The Executive Budget significantly reduces support for these students, while at the same time increasing the burden on districts, drastically impacting the district's capacity to deliver important services to our students with the most significant needs. Under this proposal, we understand that the City would have to bear additional costs of \$65 million annually. We fear that in the face of that burden, school-based IEP teams would be pressured to remove 12-month recommendations from IEPs, basing their decisions on funding availability alone and not on the individualized special education needs of those students. This funding is critical for the City's students and all students with disabilities across the state.

We hope to see a continued commitment to fully supporting students served by special education programs. We cannot, and should not, abandon our students by walking away from the reimbursement formula. The state should demonstrate a continued, unwavering commitment to students with disabilities. We respectfully request that the state budget not include this proposed cut.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Children of New York

Cooke School and Institute

INCLUDEnyc

The Law Office of Steven Alizio, PLLC

New Alternatives for Children

Parent to Parent NY, Inc.

Partnership for Children's Rights

Teach for America – New York

United Federation of Teachers

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