



February 2014

Dear Senators DeFrancisco and Valesky and Assemblymen Magnarelli and Roberts:

We are a coalition of Syracuse families, businesses, and labor and community organizations who are standing united to advocate for equitable state funding. We are writing to ask your support for additional funding to the Syracuse City School District to ensure that all of our children receive the quality education that they deserve. As an urban school district, Syracuse's budget relies heavily on State Aid to support improved educational outcomes for all students. We are requesting the following support for the Syracuse City School District:

Increase Syracuse Foundation Aid by \$7 million

The Governor's Executive budget proposes an overall State Aid increase of \$2.684 million. Unfortunately, this increase is inadequate to meet the overwhelming needs in the Syracuse City School District. An expected TRS rate increase of 8% will use nearly all of the proposed aid increase. **We ask that the State Assembly consider increasing Foundation Aid by \$7 million for Syracuse, which is more equitable considering our enrollment growth.** Without this additional funding, the District will face a deficit of \$7 million, even after it makes significant expense reductions and exhausts its fund balance. **In addition to an increase in state aid, we also propose that the Gap Elimination Adjustment be eliminated and the funding reallocated to high need districts such as Syracuse.**

Support for Flexible Universal Full-Day Pre-Kindergarten

Currently, there are 1,400 students enrolled in our Pre-K programs in both district and agency classrooms; 57% of the seats are full-day seats and 43% are half-day seats. There are approximately 200 children currently on the waiting list for Pre-K seats, and these parents are seeking a full-day placement. We are ready to fully implement an expansion that would increase Pre-K capacity by 450 full-time seats in both district and agency classrooms. We estimate that the cost to facilitate this expansion would be \$5.1 million for 25 new Pre-K classrooms. **We request your support for flexible Universal Full-Day Pre-K funding to allow us to serve more children.**

Raise the Cap for Special Services Aid

Syracuse is implementing a multi-year plan for providing rigorous, high-quality CTE and STEM programs throughout the district. The current cap on Special Services Aid for these programs limits the District's ability to drive more aid for these expanded programs. **We request your support for raising this cap on funding to enable us to increase qualified workers in New York's high-need, high-growth industries and dramatically increase our graduation rate.**

Reallocate Smart Schools Bond Act Allocation to Operating Aid

According to the Executive Aid Runs, the Smart Schools allocation for Syracuse would total over \$27 million. **However, we are concerned that the Smart Schools proposal distracts from the District's immediate need for additional operating aid for core programs in the 2014-15 school year.**

Implement Extended Learning Time Programs in 2014-2015

The Syracuse City School District is partnering with local cultural institutions and universities to provide unique and meaningful enrichment opportunities during extended learning time at **the cost of approximately \$500,000 per school per year in 12 of our extended learning time schools.** We believe the money for extended learning is needed immediately. **We request that the cost for additional staff time and enrichment instruction be funded in order to provide our students with a world-class education.**

Allocate Resources for Common Core Professional Development

Implementation of the Common Core has resulted in an investment in our District's teachers and leaders. To be ready for the new standards, curricula, **the District is expecting a minimum of 25 hours of professional development be guaranteed to each teacher next year.** We request your support of professional development to support the learning and support of SCSD educators.

Thank you for your continued support of the Syracuse City School District.

Sincerely,