# Funding Public Education

## The Issue

Two consecutive years of decreases in state education aid have failed to make up for the billions of dollars cut from public education between 2009 and 2011. Making matters worse is the state's undemocratic property tax cap, which undermines community efforts to fully fund schools and worsens the achievement gap.

Students are harmed by increased class sizes, cuts to courses and programs, and the loss of thousands of teachers and school staff. The continued defunding of the state's public colleges and universities and loss of faculty and courses erodes student access and opportunity, while community health care is deeply undermined by cuts to the state's teaching hospitals.

## Where We Stand

- The state must fully fund public schools and colleges, providing the resources students deserve at a time of ever escalating academic standards. It's unacceptable that close to three-quarters of school districts are receiving less state aid than they were five years ago and that public higher education is being starved of vital resources.
- Lawmakers must decisively respond to the ruling by the state's highest court that directed New York state to correct its longstanding practice of underfunding the education of students in low-wealth, high-needs communities.
- Investing in public education is the engine to economic strength for our communities and our state and is supported in poll after poll by three-quarters of citizens.

## When they say: When they say:

- School funding is not being cut since it went up each of the last two budgets.

## You say:

- Those much-needed increases are still far less than the $3-billion cut sustained by public education between 2009 and 2011. What's more, school districts are further hamstrung by the state's undemocratic tax-cap law, which limits the amount of revenue communities can raise locally. As a result, more than 30,000 teaching and school-related jobs have been lost over the last few years; class sizes have increased, programs and services have been slashed and extracurricular activities have been discontinued.

- State-by-state comparisons are misleading. New York state schools educate the most diverse student body in the nation and large numbers of the nation's most vulnerable children. New York City, for example, educates 50,000 homeless children and students who speak 140 different languages. Buffalo is the second poorest city in the country. These challenges, and a higher cost of living, challenge the Empire State to provide services other states don't. Even so, New York state leads the nation in measures of educational excellence.

- Money isn't the answer. Gov. Cuomo claims New York spends the most per student but ranks 38th in student performance.

## Not true. The facts are:

- The independent publication, Education Week, reported in 2012 that New York state's public-school graduation rate between 1999 and 2009 soared by 20 percent. That accounted for the second-highest rate in the nation, only behind Arizona.
- Education Week has consistently ranked New York state's public education system among the top three in the nation and, in 2012, ranked the state's public schools second best in the country in student performance.
- New York state, for the last two consecutive years, has dominated Newsweek's annual list of the nation's best public high schools. The state has accounted for more than 10 percent of the schools named to the Newsweek top 1,000 list. Among the criteria considered for inclusion on the list were four-year on-time graduation rates and the percentage of graduates accepted into college.
- New York ranks second in the nation for the percentage of students successfully completing college-level Advanced Placement courses.
- A 2012 CNBC study also ranked New York's education system as first in the nation for providing what business needs.

- Local taxpayers have too heavy a burden.

## In fact, polls consistently show that 75 percent of citizens support investing more in public education. The burden on local taxpayers has increased because the state isn't doing its fair share. This shift to local taxpayers is unfair and penalizes our most vulnerable students who live in low-wealth districts. This only worsens the achievement gap between students in wealthy and low-income districts, and robs students in high-needs districts of their right to a quality education. The state needs to meet its legal (and moral) obligations as detailed in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity ruling.