

# THE STATEWIDE SCHOOL FINANCE CONSORTIUM

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## SSFC Responds to Gov. Cuomo's 2014-15 Executive Budget Proposal

### **Statements from:**

Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director, SSFC, [rtimbs@statewideonline.org](mailto:rtimbs@statewideonline.org):

### **Focus on public education:**

“The Governor has once again presented a host of NEW initiatives he wants to support, but this time with at least some thoughts on how to fund them... albeit over the next five years. However laudable these new initiatives may be, we still desperately need enthusiastic fiscal support to fund the current K-12 system starting this year. It is also abundantly clear that if the state does not repay the current \$1.638 BILLION it has taken from schools in the form of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA), many school districts will be hard pressed to remain fiscally and educationally solvent for five years.”

### **Equitable Distribution of Education Aid**

“It was disappointing that the Governor made no mention of working to bring equity in funding, sufficient funding for K-12 or sustainable funding for our current mission. Despite being number one in per pupil spending in the United States, New York — shamefully — continues to rank in the mid-forties when it comes to getting educational aid to the children who need it the most. Hundreds of thousands of our children in all parts of New York State desperately and finally must have some genuine leadership on this blight.”

### **More on the GEA:**

“The state now has at least a \$500 million surplus. That and the personal income tax (PIT) change calculated for schools would be half the lift for the total eradication of the GEA. The legislature, as it did last year, must add significantly to that amount. If New York's budget gap has been eliminated, the state **MUST** repay what it owes to our schools. It's that simple. New York school districts have collectively lost \$8.4 billion in

state aid since the GEA was implemented in the 2009-2010 school year. The GEA was supposed to be a temporary fix — a remedy until there was no gap in the state budget. Now that the gap is gone, it's time to get rid of the adjustment.”

**Tax Abatement Proposal:**

“I want tax relief. You want tax relief. Everybody wants tax relief. But the Governor’s proposal to freeze property taxes for two years does nothing to help school districts in financial peril. Can’t we come up with a way to reduce homeowner taxes AND equitably and sufficiently fund schools? My worry is that any thought of a school district obtaining a supermajority is dead with this proposal. Can a district convince any population to embrace tax levy increases above the tax cap law and simultaneously stop residents from getting a rebate of the tax levy increase had the district stayed within the cap?”

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SSFC Executive Director Dr. Rick Timbs is available to speak with reporters and editors. Contact him at [rtimbs@statewideonline.org](mailto:rtimbs@statewideonline.org) or call Margaret McCormick at 315-373-8047 to arrange an interview.

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The Statewide School Finance Consortium (SSFC) is an organization of more than 400 public school districts whose mission is to bring equity to the distribution of New York State educational aid. SSFC membership is largely comprised of school districts from average and low-wealth communities that receive a disproportionate share of state funding in comparison to high-wealth regions of New York. The reform of the state aid process will help ensure that all of New York's children receive the same educational opportunities regardless of the wealth or location of their community. Visit us online at: [www.statewideonline.org](http://www.statewideonline.org)