

Subject: De-link School aid and educator evaluations

Date: Wednesday, June 15, 2016 at 1:45:22 PM Eastern Daylight Time

From: Geoffrey Hicks

To: CorwinJ@assembly.state.ny.us

Dear Assemblywoman Corwin,

I urge you to support legislation to decouple eligibility for School Aid increases from a requirement to negotiate and gain State Education Department approval for new teacher and principal evaluation plans.

Under revisions enacted to the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) law in 2015, school districts face the loss of two years of state aid if they are unable to negotiate revised evaluation plans with their teacher and principal unions and gain approval for those plans from the State Education Department by September 1.

The following bills, A.10569 (Rules-Nolan)/S.8034 (Kaminsky); A.9829 (Paulin) would permit districts to retain eligibility for School Aid increases so long as they continue to conduct educator evaluations using a plan approved by the State Education Department under either the 2015 statute (Education Law section 3012-d), or the prior law (§3012-c).

It is inconceivable that students would be hurt more by having their teachers evaluated using a plan approved under the prior state law than by having their schools lose state aid. For high need districts in particular, the impact of the aid loss would be drastic, requiring cuts equivalent, on average, to more than 5 percent of the budgets they asked voters to approve on May 17.

Even where districts are able to meet the deadline, the threat of losing aid forces negotiating compromises that do not serve the best interests of students or taxpayers. A similar deadline, back in 2013, contributed to some of the problems which changes in the 2015 law were intended to fix. Thus the new law repeats a crucial defect of the old.

Finally, even where local negotiations are proceeding smoothly toward meeting the deadline, there is a sense that the new law is so flawed that all the effort will have little or no value in improving teaching or school leadership.

Thank you for your consideration.

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