



LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

October 2009

State and Federal Budget Shortfalls Continue

New York schools were spared the worst of the national economic downturn, as the state maximized federal stimulus funding for education. But continued loss of revenues will put further strain on the state budget, which Governor Paterson projects faces a deficit of \$2.1 billion.

School district officials are working with the state to contain costs and spare local taxpayers from rising rates. Many schools are striving to operate more efficiently, share services and purchase supplies through cooperatives. But sustained state funding is essential to ensure that New York students receive a quality education. For further information go to:

http://www.budget.state.ny.us/pubs/press/2009/press_release09_FPQ1_update.html

Legislators Agree to Maintain Mayoral Control of New York City Schools

The State Legislature extended Mayoral control of the New York City school system through 2015.

The revised school governance law includes some changes to boost accountability and parental input. It expands the scope of policies and actions that require Board of Education approval and establishes a comprehensive public review process for significant policies.

It also establishes an extensive public process to give parents, students and staff at least six months notice of any school closing or significant change in school utilization. For further information go to: <http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A.8903-A>

Important Health Insurance Legislation for Families

Effective on September 1st a new law will expand coverage to approximately 800,000 people 19 to 29 years old who are uninsured. These young adults represent 31 percent of uninsured New Yorkers.

This new law requires insurers to allow unmarried children through age 29 - regardless of financial dependence - to be covered under a parent's group health insurance policy. Premiums will be paid for by families, not employers, and would cost less because coverage is under group policies rather than individual policies. The law also requires

insurers to offer employers an option to purchase coverage that includes young adults as dependents in family policies through age 29.

Young adults often become ineligible for coverage under their parents' policies at age 19 or upon high school or college graduation. This new law will help families provide for coverage for young adults. For further information visit the NYS insurance department web site at: http://www.ins.state.ny.us/health/S6030_Age29.htm

Gillibrand Works to Combat Childhood Obesity

U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand introduced federal legislation to improve the health of students by banning trans fats in schools. Under her plan, schools that receive federal reimbursements would be required to remove items containing trans fats.

NYS PTA passed a resolution in 2005 supporting the elimination of non-naturally occurring trans fats from school foods. PTAs throughout the state have been working to reduce trans fats from school meals, a la cart vending choices, foods available for sale at school events, and foods used in fundraising. For more information go to: <http://gillibrand.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/?id=0748b2f8-ac49-4a9b-bb2b-c65683d04212>

Harkin Heads U.S. Senate Education Committee

U.S. Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa has stepped into the chairmanship of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which was left vacant with the passing of Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts.

As the chairman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that oversees education spending, Senator Harkin is a key player on K-12 policy. He had a lead role in securing some \$100 billion for education in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the economic-stimulus bill that passed in February.

The five-term Senator will now have broad authority over both policy and money for education issues in the Senate, placing him in a powerful position as Congress prepares to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It is hoped that he will bridge the disconnect between education policy and funding.

Senator Harkin has been a champion for students in special education, working closely on various versions of the IDEA and the Americans With Disabilities Act. He also has been a supporter of physical exercise and child health as a component of education, having tried unsuccessfully to push through a bill that would have boosted the nutritional standards for food sold in school vending machines. For more information go to: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/09/09/03harkin.h29.html>