



A PROJECT OF



March 26, 2014

Speaker of Assembly Sheldon Silver
Assemblymember Catherine Nolan, Education Committee Co-Chair
Assemblymember Karim Camara, Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Caucus Chair
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Legislative leaders:

We recently learned that the Assembly proposes to completely eliminate the Contract for Excellence (C4E) law, and that the Senate proposes to retain the law only for New York City. We are writing to strongly urge you to retain these statutory requirements for all school districts receiving an increase in state school aid. The C4E law is vital in promoting accountability, transparency and parent participation in decisions on how school aid is spent in the state's public schools.

The Contract for Excellence law (C4E) was passed as a direct result of the Court of Appeals decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity(CFE) case. The Court found that New York City schoolchildren were deprived of their constitutional right to a "sound basic education." The Court based that ruling on the significant deficiencies in essential resources, such as "over half of New York City schoolchildren are in classes of 26 or more, and tens of thousands are in classes of over 30." The Court concluded that these essential resource deficits were the direct result of an inadequate and inequitable school funding system.

While the CFE ruling ordered specific funding for New York City, the Court also invited to State to reform school funding statewide. In response to that invitation, the Legislature enacted the 2007 Foundation Aid Formula.

The CFE ruling also ordered the state to "ensure[s] a system of accountability to measure whether the reforms actually provide the opportunity for a sound basic education." Along with the new Foundation Aid Formula, the Legislature adopted the C4E law to ensure districts develop "C4E Plans" to ensure the use of increased state aid to essential and effective staff, programs and services, such as reduced class

size and interventions for at-risk students. Importantly, the law required districts develop the C4E plans with the direct participation of parents and community members. The law also requires annual audits would validate district adherence to its Plan.

In many districts including NYC, the C4E law is the only mechanism that directs new funding to the essential resources students must have to succeed academically, and that allows parents a voice in the allocation of these critical school resources.

Rather than eliminate this vital accountability mechanism, we strongly recommend the Legislature strengthen the C4E law, along with phasing-in full funding of the 2007 Foundation Aid Formula so New York's high need districts receive the essential resources needed for a constitutional sound basic education. In this regard, we have offered amendments to strengthen the accountability and public participation provisions in the law. We urge the Assembly and Senate to adopt our recommendations in the final budget.

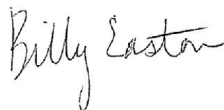
C4E serves the State's vital interest in transparency, predictability and accountability in our district and schools, and, when properly implemented, engages parents in relevant and meaningful efforts with their districts to improve education in their schools.

Thank you and we are available to assist you in this important matter.

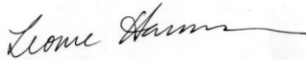
Sincerely,



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cc: Members of the Education Committee