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MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

S.6296

A.7447

Relates to renewing NYC's obligation to reduce class size

Class Size Matters strongly urges the Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S.6296/ A. 7447, in order to renew New York City's commitment to lower class size.

In 2003, in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit, the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals, determined that NYC public school class sizes were too large to provide students with their constitutional right to a sound basic education. In recognition of that fact, and the way in which the evidence on the excessive class sizes and its negative impact on student outcomes was central to that case, the Contracts for Excellence law was passed in 2007, with a specific provision to require the city to develop and implement a five-year class size reduction plan.

And yet, class sizes increased sharply in 2008 and thereafter, because the city and the state cut back on their funding for schools. Class sizes, particularly in the early grades, are now even larger than they were when the Court issued its decision, particularly in the early grades. As of last school year, about one third or over 300,000 NYC students were crammed into classes of 30 or more.

Reducing class size has proven through research to be one of the best ways to improve student learning, lower teacher attrition rates, and to narrow achievement and opportunity gaps between students of different racial, gender, economic and ability groups.

Smaller classes have also been the top priority of NYC public school parents with children in grades Kindergarten through 12th when asked what change they would most like to see in their children's school, ever since the Department of Education began to administer these surveys in 2007.

Since as a direct result of the CFE decision, NYC public schools are finally due to receive their full promised Foundation Aid from the state, including about \$530 million next year, rising to \$1.3 billion annually over the next three years, it is only right and proper that the city be obligated to update and implement its five-year class size reduction plan, and begin to provide NYC public students with their right to a sound, basic education by lowering their class sizes. These bills that would update and amend the original Contracts for Excellence law are designed to require the city to do just that.

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