



Hazel N. Dukes
President

NAACP New York State Conference
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

Memorandum of Support

S.6296

A.7447

***To require New York City to develop and
implement a five-year class size reduction plan***

The goal of the NAACP is to ensure a society in which all individuals have equal rights without discrimination based on race. And yet public-school students in New York City, the majority of whom are children of color, continue to be subjected to class sizes that on average 15 to 30 percent larger than those in the rest of the state.

We urge the Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S.6296/ A. 7447, to ensure that New York City students are provided with true equity by giving them the smaller classes they need to succeed.

Rigorous research has shown that class size reduction has been linked to better student outcomes in every way that can be measured, including higher test scores and grades, fewer disciplinary referrals, and lower dropout rates.

Students who are assigned to smaller classes are more likely to graduate from high school in four years, attend college and earn a STEM degree many years later. Moreover, studies show that the students who benefit the most from class size reduction are children of color and/or those who are economically disadvantaged.

The Court of Appeals in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) case concluded that NYC public school students were denied their constitutional right to a sound basic education, in part because their class sizes were too large. In 2003, they wrote:

“Plaintiffs presented measurable proof, credited by the trial court, that NYC schools have excessive class sizes, and that class size affects learning.... evidence of the advantages of smaller class sizes supports the inference sufficiently to show a meaningful correlation between the large classes in City schools and the outputs...of poor academic achievement and high dropout rates... [Tens of thousands of students are placed in overcrowded classrooms ...and provided with inadequate facilities and equipment. The number of children in these straits is large enough to represent a systemic failure.”

And yet class sizes are now larger than when the Court delivered that decision.

Due to the efforts of the State legislature, NYC is finally due to receive full Foundation funding as promised by the CFE decision. Now it is time that the city also delivered smaller classes to its students. These bills would achieve this goal, by amending and updating the class size requirements in the Contracts for Excellence law, first passed in 2007. We urge the Legislature to approve this bill.

***For more information, please contact Hazel N. Dukes, President, NAACP New York State Conference,
naacp@nysnaacp.org***