



MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

S.6296

A.7447

New York State Allies for Public Education supports the passage S.6296/ A. 7447, to renew New York City's commitment to lower class size.

May 2021

New York State Allies for Public Education is a coalition of over 70 parent and educator groups across New York State. We urge the Senate and Assembly to approve the above bills, which would amend the state's Contracts for Excellence law by requiring New York City schools to update their five-year class size reduction plan..

New York City students are disadvantaged by the fact that their average class sizes are 15 to 30 percent higher than those in the rest of the state. In 2003, in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit, the NY Court of Appeals concluded that public school class sizes in NYC were too large to provide their students with their constitutional right to a sound basic education.

Smaller classes have been shown to be one of the best ways to improve student learning and narrow the opportunity gap, especially for disadvantaged students, students of color, and those with special needs.

In recognition of this fact, the Contracts for Excellence law was passed in 2007, to fulfill the Court mandate. The law would send high needs districts more school aid and at the same time, obligate NYC to create a five-year class size reduction plan. But due to budget cuts at the city and state levels, class sizes increased sharply instead, and are now larger than when the Court of Appeals issued that decision.

Since as a direct result of the CFE decision, NYC public schools are finally due to receive their full Foundation Aid from the state, consisting of \$530 million next year, increasing to \$1.3 billion annually over the next three years, the city should be obligated to update and implement its five-year class size reduction plan. Only then will NYC public students be provided with their right to a sound, basic education by lowering class sizes.

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