

Educator, Facilitator, Engine for ECONOMIC GROWTH

BOCES are the premier example of inter-municipal collaboration in New York state. Since its creation more than 70 years ago, local school districts have been able to use BOCES to provide a wide range of educational programs and services through an organizational structure that is a model of shared services. BOCES are able to leverage the strength of multiple school districts and provide a variety of services that, individually, school districts could not provide because the costs would be prohibitive.

With this in mind, the BOCES of NY State would like to underscore several important items that would assist BOCES in our mission:

Increase Aid to Education

The Governor's proposed 2020-21 budget proposal appropriates \$28.5 billion in school aid, an additional \$826 million over last year. This amount represents an increase of \$504 million in Foundation Aid; however, included in this amount is a \$50 million increase for community schools and \$10 million in consolidated categorical expense aids. This amount is significantly less than what is required by districts.

Recommendation: Increase the direct school aid to districts for the 2020-21 school year.

Eliminate the Provision that Consolidates Expense Aids

The Governor's proposed 2020-21 budget would, if enacted, consolidate 10 major expense-based aids (BOCES, high tax, special services, hardware and technology, charter school transitional, software, library, textbook, supplemental public excess cost and academic enhancement), beginning in the 2020-21 school year and would include them as part of Foundation Aid. The proposal essentially eliminates these aid categories, which reimburse expenses that districts incur for essential programs and services. The elimination of the aid categories creates a lack of predictability for schools and hurts schools that see necessary increases in expenses in these categories. Of particular concern is the consolidation of BOCES Aid. This action would undermine the very reasons for the creation of BOCES: allowing districts to work cooperatively to provide students and schools with essential programs and services while creating efficiencies and equity of access.

Recommendation: Expense-based aids should remain separate from Foundation Aid.

Continue reading for Other Supported Positions >>>



Other Supported POSITIONS:

Increase the Aidable Salary for Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs

BOCES are a major provider of high quality, cost effective Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. In the 2018-19 school year, more than 37,000 students participated in CTE programs and obtained essential college and career skills.

Despite the success of these programs, the existing CTE BOCES Aid formula, established in 1992, provides aid for \$30,000 of a BOCES CTE instructor's salary. The current average salary statewide is \$67,000. Because of this, the state's contribution to CTE programs continues to decrease, shifting the costs to local taxpayers and reducing students' access to these highly successful programs.

Recommendations: Increase the aidable salary for CTE instructors to the average statewide salary, and include those BOCES teachers who teach in P-Tech programs and STEM high schools.

Support the Funding for Recovery High School Programs Operated by BOCES

The final enacted 2019-20 budget included \$1 million for BOCES to operate Recovery High Schools. BOCES support these high schools that are designed to help students who have been in treatment for substance abuse to return to high school while receiving the supports they require to remain substance free. This funding allowed for the establishment of three Recovery High Schools operated by BOCES. However, the Governor's proposed 2020-21 budget does not continue this vital funding, despite the need that still exists for these specialty high schools throughout the state.

Recommendation: Include \$1 million for the expansion of Recovery High School programs.

Allow Districts with 51-100 Members to Remain Permanently in Their Health Insurance Consortiums

School districts and BOCES participate in health insurance consortiums as an effective way to reduce the significant costs associated with providing health insurance for their employees. In 2015, New York state changed the definition of "small group" for purposes of health insurance coverage, leaving over 100 school districts at risk of being required to leave their health insurance consortiums. Because this change subjected districts to very significant cost increases, since 2015 there have been several laws enacted that allow these districts to remain in their health insurance consortiums. However, these protections are scheduled to expire in December of 2021. To avoid this from happening, a permanent solution must be enacted.

Recommendation: Allow school districts with 51-100 members to remain in their health insurance consortiums permanently.

Continue reading for Other Supported Positions >>>

Other Supported POSITIONS:

Authorize BOCES to Address Long-Term Employee Costs Through the Establishment of Other Post-Employment Benefit (“OPEB”) Trusts or Reserves

Despite the large and increasing costs that BOCES continue to incur each year on behalf of their component districts in employee post-retirement benefits (OPEB), we do not have the legal ability to set aside funds for this purpose. This very significant long-term financial liability threatens the fiscal stability of BOCES and their component districts. To date, it is estimated that the 37 BOCES have responsibility for approximately \$3.5 billion in legacy costs for all current employees and retirees.

Recommendation: Support the State Comptroller’s proposal that authorizes the establishment of other post-employment benefits trusts.

Prevent Students’ Use of E-cigarettes and Vaping

E-cigarettes and vaping has become a public health crisis among students. In an attempt to prevent and/or reduce the use of these devices among all youth and adults, the Governor’s proposed 2020-21 budget includes several proposals designed to address this significant and growing problem.

Recommendation: Support these provisions included in the Governor’s budget proposal.