



ESSAA

Empire State Supervisors &
Administrators Association

Supporting school leaders. Every day.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Winter 2022

ESSAA continues to be your eyes and ears in Albany as we enter the two-year mark of leading schools through the pandemic. During the 2022 legislative session, ESSAA will advocate for the issues most relevant to your practice as a school leader. A recent survey of our membership confirmed that our priorities will continue to focus on supporting the development of well-prepared leaders and ensuring the health, safety, and wellness of all students as we emerge from the crisis of the past couple of years.

Spotlight on Priorities

Mask Regulation Stay Extended. On January 31, 2022, the State Supreme Court Appellate Division ruled that the stay allowing state mask mandates to remain in force will continue pending resolution of the State's appeal of the lower court ruling that the mandate is unconstitutional. The regulation establishing the State's authority will end on February 21, unless otherwise extended. The State has until March 2nd to file papers in the appeal.

ESSAA Commented on Proposed Substantial Equivalency of Education Regulations. In January, ESSAA was invited to provide feedback on proposed regulations that would change how substantial equivalency of education is determined for private schools operating within New York. ESSAA will continue to monitor the development of these regulations.

ESSAA Endorses Kathy Hochel for a full term. On January 27, 2022, ESSAA President Carol Conklin-Spillane endorsed Governor Kathy Hochel for a full term: "The ESSAA is proud to endorse Governor Kathy Hochel for a full term because she is the right person for the job... The Governor has demonstrated unwavering support for public education through strategic investments and we appreciate her leadership as we continue to navigate the challenges of the pandemic together."

Highlights from Governor Hochel's State of the State.

- **Teacher Shortage:** Governor Hochel identified enrollment in State teacher programs declining. She proposes accelerating the teacher certification process and temporarily remove the cap on how much certain retired teachers can earn if they return to teaching while earning a pension. She did not elaborate on which teachers could be eligible. The Governor also proposed eliminating the controversial teacher certification test.
- **Mental Health in Schools:** There is a growing concern about the mental health of students throughout the pandemic. The Governor proposes providing state grants to local school districts providing mental health support, as well as a new state support system that would match federal funds to school districts dedicated to mental health. The governor also proposes a program whereby SUNY and CUNY students, in education related fields, receive academic credit and other service requirements to volunteers who help with tutoring, mental health services, hunger prevention and after school activities.
- **Foundation Aid** Governor Hochel proposed fully funding Foundation Aid, the state's funding formula that gives additional funds to higher needs districts by the 2023-2024 school year.
- **College Access:** Governor Hochel set a goal of having two-thirds of New Yorkers obtain a college degree by 2030. Her plan is to expand access to college-level courses in high school and provide some tuition relief for students. She also proposed expanding tuition assistance to 75,000 part-time students by eliminating a rule that they must earn 24 credits the year before they want assistance to start.
- **SUNY:** Governor Hochel put forward a plan to increase enrollment in SUNY schools by one-third, to over 500,000 students, with enrollment and completion rates reflecting the state's diversity. She proposed recruiting and supporting top faculty and staff; providing affordable credentials and degrees to all kinds of learners; doubling sponsored research; start-ups and patents so SUNY can catalyze economic innovation and good jobs about the state. The governor proposes that students who graduate will be prepared for their careers without a crushing loan debt by streamlining the application process, simplify and improve the SUNY transfer process and jobs acceleration to build bridges between education and work.
- **Senate Legislation- January 2022- Charter Schools:** The Senate Education Department met on January 10, 2022. Of particular interest is Senator Liu's bill S7666, which would strip SUNY Board of Trustees of its authority to grant new charter schools. Senator Liu's bill would grant the Board of Regents authority to grant new charter schools. Assemblyman Michael Benedetto, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee said his committee will undertake the same bill considering SUNY's attempt to "circumvent" the current cap on charter school expansion.