

it takes a professional!



NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION FOR
**SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOL
BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS, INC.**

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TESTIMONY

New York State Association for
Superintendents of School Buildings and Grounds

Submitted to
Joint Fiscal Committees of the New York State Legislature

Hearing on the
FY 2014-15 Executive Budget
Tuesday, January 28, 2014

On behalf of the 600 Facilities Professionals – members of *New York State Association for Superintendents of School Buildings and Grounds (SBGA)* – who represent over 700 of New York's public school districts and 36 BOCES, we are grateful for the opportunity to submit written testimony to share with you our thoughts regarding the Governor's proposed 2014-15 Executive Budget and present our 2014 legislative and budget priorities.

The New York State Association for Superintendents of School Buildings and Grounds is a professional organization comprised of dedicated men and women responsible for maintaining and operating the thousands of school buildings and facilities across our state. SBGA members are committed to ensuring the safety, health and comfort of the students and staff.

There are over 3,050 school buildings in New York State. These buildings are the places of learning and growth for over 2.7 million students and must be consistently conducive to learning. This means they must have adequate space, equipment and capacity. They must be clean, bright, safe and appropriately maintained.

SBGA was very glad to see the Governor's proposed 2014-15 executive budget:

- **Smart Schools Bond Act** - The 2014-15 Executive budget recommends a \$2 billion general obligation bond act to be placed before the voters in November 2014. The Bond proceeds will fund enhanced education technology in schools for such projects as high speed broadband. In addition, proceeds will invest in the construction of new prekindergarten classroom space. SBGA supports the proposed Smart Schools Bond Act.
- **Building Aid** - The 2014-15 Executive budget appropriates \$2.84 billion for Building Aid, including Reorganization Incentive Building Aid. This represents an increase of \$116.47, or 4.28 percent.
 - Building Aid is one of the State's most costly formula-based school aids. Significant state resources and incentives have been available for many years to make capital improvements in our schools; however, there are no requirements or incentives to maintain those improvements, nor to take a longer view of the cost-efficiency of longer term improvements (e.g., the replacement of heating plants, roofs, flooring and windows, or of indoor air quality systems). In fact, in some cases, the capital incentives have been so rich, that it was in some districts' best interest not to maintain a capital improvement; when the infrastructure deteriorated, the state would pay the large majority of the replacement costs.
 - Failure to properly fund the resources of the facilities management departments of our school districts – or further reductions of these resources - will compound our inability to be as effective as possible in delivering services that maintain the integrity of our infrastructure, the safety of our building and grounds, and the usefulness of our equipment and utilities. SBGA recommends that a percentage of Foundation Aid be set aside to support facilities management and maintenance services.

SBGA's 2014 legislative and budget priorities seek to support professionals who manage school facilities, incentivize efficiencies to ensure long term cost savings, protect the State's investment in our buildings and grounds and eliminate unnecessary requirements that do not add value to our infrastructures.

SBGA asks for your consideration of the following priorities:

1. Energy costs are a wild card for school district. The cost of the commodity is very difficult to predict. Districts use many tools to address price such as purchasing cooperatives. Despite any other factor that effects a child's education, the lights and heat must be on in the building to provide our children with a sound education. Unfortunately the volatility of this cost factor makes it extremely difficult for school districts to plan and budget effectively. Therefore, SBGA supports A.1155/S.1092 by M.A. Cahill and Senator Maziarz which would establish an energy reserve fund.
2. The 2% cap has made it difficult for our members to advance conservation measures. While retro-fitting, upgrading and management measures can all result in short (3-5 year) paybacks Boards of Education are hesitant to use this year's dollars today even though they will create a savings in future years. Therefore, SBGA supports A.5053 by M.A. Englebright which would establish a minimum standard for maintenance funding and allow school districts to make their investments outside the restrictions of the property tax cap.
3. Investments increase cost efficiencies through use of innovative smart technologies, green energy applications, and the commitment to maintenance will reap long terms savings. Unfortunately, most schools do not have the financial stability or extra dollars to make such investments themselves. Therefore, SBGA supports the establishment of an "Energy Efficiency Grant Program" that provides school districts who prioritize energy efficiency access to additional resources to help increase long term productivity and savings.
4. The safety of New York's students is our number one priority. SBGA believes that diligent care and maintenance is essential to ensuring a healthy, safe and accessible environment for student achievement. However, unnecessary and repetitive requirement which provide no added knowledge or value is illogical. Therefore, SBGA supports A.6442/S.3968 by M.A. Gunther and Senator Ritchie which eliminates the requirement for an annual visual inspection.
5. In 2011, New York State established a statewide exam for Directors of School Facilities I, II and III, thereby broadening the pool of qualified candidates statewide. Chapter 403 of the laws of 403 recognized the many responsibilities Directors of School Facilities must be educated and prepared to undertake and created a process for ensuring school districts had access to qualified professionals. However, sometimes those professionals are within the school already and need only the opportunity for promotion. Therefore, SBGA supports A.8493/S.6330 by M.A. Cahill and Senator Golden which makes the technical amendments needed to allow for a promotional examination.

On behalf of the New York State Association for Superintendents of School Buildings and Grounds, we would like to thank you for your continued support of clean, healthy, well maintained school facilities and the opportunity to offer our professional insight.

Respectfully submitted,

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