Question and Answers

Name:

Institution:

Course:

Date:

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**1.**

The State of New York has one of the most inequitable education funding systems in the United States of America. The state ranks 49th across the U.S. according to the information retrieved from the State Education Department (SED), the state owes districts $4.2 billion in Foundation aid. 62% of this amount of money is owed to school districts that SED defines as high need and have 50% or more Black and Latino students. Out of the 674 school districts in the state, only 25 are high needs and have 50 percent or more Black and Latino students. Governor Cuomo has shown no significant interest in prioritizing students' needs in the high need, mostly Black and Latino school districts of New York. 25 school districts out of the 674 educate 80% Black and Latino students in the state, and these 25 school districts are owed 62% of the Foundation Aid that has not been paid.

Alliance for Quality Education believes that failing to fund Foundation Aid fully leads to the failure to fund majority Black and Latino schools. The continuous underfunding of schools coupled with the unwillingness to recognize and rectify such acts results in disparate outcomes for students. For instance, studies have shown that a sustainable and consistent increase in education funding is more likely to increase the number of low-income students graduating. However, in the State of New York, districts with great need are owed the majority of Foundation Aid. Alliance for Quality Education believes that all students deserve the right to a public school education where they can acquire the basics of reading, writing, and math and be given an opportunity to experience a wide range of academic and artistic paths they can follow to become productive adults.

**2.**

The Foundation Aid formula was created in 2007 following the highest court’s ruling in favor of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. Parents had sued New York State for underfunding schools and not meeting its constitutional burden of providing their children with a sound basic education. The state was found guilty of the charge. At this point, the Foundation Aid formula was enacted by the newly elected Governor Spitzer and the legislature. The Foundation Aid formula is based on student needs and drives more funding to high-needs, low-income school districts. It is designed to level the playing field between wealthy districts and low 0ncome districts by ensuring that districts with higher student needs and less local school revenue receive more funding from the state. The State of New York's operating aid that school districts depend on offers educational programming. The New York State did not fully fund Foundation Aid in 2008 primarily because of the fiscal impact of the Great Recession in that year. In 2020, Foundation Aid was not fully disbursed. The Governor siphoned $1.4 billion from the $3.8 billion allocated to the state by Washington for other costs and squeezed the remaining $2.4 billion into that year's education budget (Arbetter, 2021). The chances of Foundation aid being fully disbursed this year are minimal given the Governor's continued desire to repeal Foundation Aid.

**3.**

High needs schools in New York that qualify for Foundation Aid have 50% or more student population coming from low-income families, high teacher turnover, as well as a high percentage of teachers lacking teacher certification or teaching outside of their field. Most of the high need schools in New York City are found in the Bronx. Such schools not rated "Exceeding Target" struggle to attract teachers, and all qualify for the Foundation Aid. High needs schools are also found in Roosevelt, Albany, Hempstead, Wyandanch, Amityville, among other districts across the state. Underfunding of the Foundation Aid has resulted in a large number of high school drop outs in such districts. Studies have shown that increased education funding by 10% can result in a 10% increase in low-income students' graduation rates. There is a need to provide employment options for many high school dropouts in my area. Thus, I will advocate for increased funding and equipment of Job Corps programs in my area to provide free-of-charge education and vocational training of the young men and women to equip them with skills that can help them earn a living.

**4.**

I strongly believe that our communities are only as strong as our children and their ability to succeed in the future. Thus, we must prioritize making an adequate investment in our schools. New York children have an unlimited potential to succeed only if they are given the opportunity to fund the Foundation Aid fully. While the program was designed to increase classroom operations aid by billions of dollars across the state, our country has barely managed to meet its funding targets as the formula has been chronically underfunded. It breaks my heart to see a formula that was designed to fix the problems faced by many students ignored to the point that it adversely affects them. Schools in our district are crowded with 30 students or more, lack enough specialized teachers and resources for English language learners. Summer school classes and tutoring are in short supply for students who require them as guidance counselors serve hundreds of students making individualized attention difficult. Something better can be done for our students. We need to prioritize funding the Foundation Aid to fulfill our moral, constitutional, and economic duty of properly investing in all our students' education. Doing so will help lower class sizes, maintain safe and healthy schools, and provide enrichment programs that can help students succeed.

**5.**

Governor Cuomo has continuously failed to fund public schools in New York. Since 2011, when he became the Governor, Cuomo has significantly exhibited an unwillingness to provide funding for public schools because the state has met its Campaign for Fiscal Equity obligations. During his first year as the Governor, Cuomo cut taxes on millionaires and made cuts to education funding that amounted to $1.3 billion. His budgets in the following years are characterized by minimal increases in Foundation Aid. The increases provided to schools barely keep up with inflation.

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**6.**

Before joining John Jay College, I attended a public school. My school was characterized by a high number of students across all the classes that the few available teachers could hardly meet their student's needs as they were sometimes overwhelmed. Some of the students we started with did not manage to complete their K-12 education because they dropped out of school. The excess number of students in classrooms against the small number of teachers adversely affected the quality of education. Underfunding schools has a negative impact on low-income students. Every child has a right to education, and the government must fulfill its constitutional mandate by fully funding Foundation Aid to the benefit of the country's future generations and well-being. To ensure this is done, I commit to supporting such coalitions as the Alliance for Quality Education in their mandate of mobilizing communities across the state to keep New York true to its promise of ensuring a high-quality public school education for all students.

Reference

Arbetter, S. (2021). Stakeholders on Governor Cuomo’s Education budget. *Spectrum News*. Retrieved from <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/central-ny/capital-tonight/2021/01/21/stakeholders-on-governor-cuomo-s-education-budget>