

June 27, 2014

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The 2014-15 NYS Enacted Budget includes an appropriation of \$40 million to expand full day pre-kindergarten outside of New York City. As educational leaders in our community, we know the value of early educational opportunities and how they promote children's success in school and beyond. In order to fulfill the commitment to fully implement full-day pre-kindergarten for every four year old in the state, the necessary resources must be readily available in order to benefit students, families and communities. We are eager to implement this vision and we know families in our community are eager to take advantage of the new services. Unfortunately, our school districts are unable to use this opportunity due to the reimbursement structure of this legislation.

Requiring us to pay all the money up front for this new pre-K program is problematic. Our districts have been forced into programmatic cuts in their K-12 budgets after years of inadequate funding, with the most deleterious effects in our highest need districts. This makes it virtually impossible for us to wait until the close of the year to receive reimbursements. We are ready to expand pre-K, but need the funding in order to do so. We do not have the funds to pay for this program out of pocket first. The existing state funded half-day pre-k program is successful because it provides upfront funding. We need the same funding methodology in order for full-day pre-K to succeed. In order to have a successful program, our districts must have predictable and sustainable funding to pay for all the necessary expenses such as teacher salaries, curricula equipment, transportation, etc.

There is need and demand in our districts to expand full day pre-K. We are eager to expand full-day Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK), but the Request For Proposals (RFP) process, coupled with the reimbursement strategy, make it extremely challenging, if not downright impossible to use. In order to make your commitment to universal pre-K a reality, it is imperative that you re-evaluate the reimbursement process to create a steady and reliable flow of funds, with upfront funding, that supports districts immediate desire to offer quality pre-K to our children.

Sincerely,