



# THE 4201 SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

## TESTIMONY

Presented to

Fiscal Committees of the New York State Legislature  
Hearing On  
The FY 2016-2017 Executive Budget  
January 27, 2016  
Albany, New York

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Cleary School for the Deaf  
(Nesconset)

Henry Viscardi School  
(Albertson)

Lavelle School for the Blind  
(Bronx)

Lexington School for the Deaf  
(Queens)

Mill Neck Manor School for the  
Deaf  
(Mill Neck)

New York Institute for Special  
Education (Bronx)

New York School for the Deaf  
(White Plains)



Rochester School for the Deaf  
(Rochester)

St. Francis de Sales School for  
the Deaf  
(Brooklyn)

St. Joseph's School for the  
Deaf  
(Bronx)

St. Mary's School for the Deaf  
(Buffalo)

Hello, my name is Bernadette Kappen, and I am executive director of the New York Institute for Special Education. I am pleased to be joined today by Timothy Kelly, superintendent of St. Mary's School for the Deaf in Buffalo, and Vivian Higuera, a junior at the Institute.

As Chair of the *4201 Schools Association*, representing eleven schools serving students who are deaf, blind and severely physically disabled throughout New York State, I would like to extend our appreciation for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the 2016-17 Executive Budget as it relates to issues impacting our students.

To begin, we would like to thank the Legislature for your longstanding support of our students. Specifically, we appreciate the 2.4% increase provided in last year's budget. This increase, which resulted in a \$2.3 million investment in our schools, was the first increase in six years. It is the first investment in our schools since our funding system was dramatically changed in 2011-12. While grateful for the additional support, we were apprehensive that the additional funds would be considered a single year investment. We are so pleased that the 2016-17 Executive budget recognizes the ongoing programmatic needs of our schools and includes the additional \$2.3 million.

In addition, we would extend our appreciation for the additional support provided by the Smart School's Bond Act. The advocacy of the Legislature was instrumental in securing additional funds to support an investment in technology at special education schools. Recently the New York State Education Department has informed the schools of their allotment which was based on a per student allocation. A total of \$411,774 was made available to the 4201 schools. Awards ranged from \$19,456 to \$85,066, with an average award \$37,434. We anticipate that the Department will soon publish the process by which schools will access the resources and implement the investment in technology.

As you know, the 2016-17 Executive Budget recommends a modest additional investment in public education. Over the next several weeks, Legislators and education advocates will have a

robust discussion on how best to fund public education. We hope that while those discussions ensue you will consider the needs of the students at our schools too.

We recommend that our funding be increased on par with the final increase afforded to public education as the students in our schools would be supported by a school aid increase if not for the nature of their disability. Similar to last year, we recommend that an increase be provided directly to the schools and be considered ongoing operational support. A direct increase also ensures that local school districts are not adversely impacted by the state's investment.

While we are extremely grateful for the investment made to our schools last year, the accumulated effect of 6 years of zero percent growth on our ability to appropriately maintain our facilities and grounds has been compromised. We recommend the investment of \$11 million for the 4201 schools in support of deferred maintenance. The health and safety of our students and staff is critical. An investment would allow our schools to fix roofs, replace boilers, upgrade electrical and plumbing, and modernize fire and safety equipment, etc.

The 4201 schools are proud to be a partner with New York State in ensuring high quality educational opportunity to students with low incidence disabilities. We take our responsibility to provide each of our students with a safe and healthy environment by which to grow and succeed. We appreciate the support provided that makes our schools a reality to the students we serve across the state. Thank you.

Submitted by,

Bernadette M. Kappen, Ph.D.  
Chair, 4201 Schools Association  
Executive Director, New York Institute for Special Education

Timothy M. Kelly

Vice Chair, 4201 Schools Association  
 Superintendent, St. Mary's School for the Deaf

### **Background Information**

For more than 200 years, the people of New York have relied on the expertise of the 4201 Schools to provide educational services to children who are deaf, blind and severely physically disabled. There are eleven "4201" schools located throughout the state, both upstate and downstate.

Each school is governed by its own Board of Directors, receives financial support for operating expenses from the State, and depends on private donations for program enhancements and innovations. The 4201 Schools have established a long tradition of excellence in education and in providing innovative educational services to our students and their families.

The 4201 Schools and their locations are as follows:

- Cleary School for the Deaf - Nesconset
- Henry Viscardi School- Albertson
- Lavelle School for the Blind - Bronx
- Lexington School for the Deaf - Queens
- Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf - Mill Neck
- New York Institute for Special Education – Bronx
- New York School for the Deaf - White Plains
- Rochester School for the Deaf - Rochester
- St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf - Brooklyn
- St. Joseph's School for the Deaf - Bronx
- St. Mary's School for the Deaf - Buffalo

Under Section 4201 of the Education Law, the State has designated and authorized certain private schools to serve the special education needs of deaf or blind or physically disabled students. Students come to 4201 Schools upon application by their parents or school districts, and with the approval of the State Education Commissioner. Several 4201 Schools maintain residential programs, which are also funded through lump sum budget appropriations.

Only students who are profoundly deaf, legally blind, severely physically disabled, or severely emotionally disabled are referred to the 4201 Schools by local school districts, parents, physicians, clinics and other interested parties. An intake evaluation by the 4201 School is completed, and placement is made upon the recommendation of and approval by the student's home school district and the Commissioner of Education. Approval is based on the availability of an appropriate education program. There are no charges or fees to parents for educational costs, transportation, room or board.

Our students benefit from the academic programs, vocational programs, life skills programs and other specially designed programs at the 4201 Schools. They also take part in the interscholastic sports and other extra-curricular and co-curricular activities at their school. Our schools also work with children with multiple disabilities, for whom the schools are educational/therapeutic environments that foster growth and development in all areas - academic, sensory, and physically. Some of our students with multiple disabilities may always need certain supports to achieve an interdependent adult life, but for whom academic and personal success is attainable and an important part of our schools' mission.

Those students requiring a 24-hour structured environment as noted in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or whose homes are too far to commute back and forth to school each day live on campus for five days a week at some of the 4201 Schools. There are comprehensive learning and recreational programs for students residing in school dormitories.

The 4201 Schools provide quality education services to children with low incidence disabilities. Our schools are working constantly to support the academic progress and success of the students we serve.

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