

THE STATEWIDE SCHOOL FINANCE CONSORTIUM

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CONTACT: Margaret McCormick, [315-373-8047](tel:315-373-8047)

Dr. Rick Timbs, rtimbs@statewideonline.org

SSFC Responds to Final Report Of the New NY Education Reform Commission

Statements from:

Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director, SSFC, rtimbs@statewideonline.org:

Disappointed by the report and its recommendations:

“The report is underwhelming. It just falls so short. It’s a loss of two years’ time. There is nothing new here. We’ve been hearing about these things for years. There are some nice ideas and suggestions for schools in the report, but nothing to help schools survive and thrive.”

Where are the recommendations for education funding and aid?

“The Commission held hearings all over the state, but there wasn’t a single hearing held to focus on equitable, adequate and sustainable education state aid funding and the need for reform. These are difficult issues that need to be confronted and this is one of the reasons the Commission was formed. Instead, the Commission chose to avoid the most critical fiscal ‘reform’ issues faced by school districts, their students and taxpayers. It’s an unfortunate, missed opportunity.”

We concur completely with the supplemental statements of Commission member Michael Rebell, Executive Director of the Campaign for Educational Equity (see Page 64). Rebell said: “I am particularly concerned that the commission has not even attempted to grapple with the serious education finance issues that have been undermining educational progress throughout the state since the Recession of 2008. ... In neglecting to deal with these issues, the commission has ignored our specific charges to ‘evaluate education funding, distribution of State aid, and operating costs ...’, and to ‘examine the unique set of issues faced by high-need urban and rural school districts...’”

Convene a NEW Commission made up of education finance leaders:

“We call on the governor to convene a panel of public education finance experts to study the Foundation Aid formula and come up with recommendations for its overhaul - a commission similar to the ‘Berger Commission,’ which made recommendations for restructuring the hospital and nursing home system in New York State. This Commission and the political leadership in New York State are either unable or unwilling to grapple with and solve school funding issues. This must be addressed NOW.”

We Need to Achieve Fairness, Equity and a New State Aid Formula:

“We need to end the Gap Elimination Adjustment immediately and create a new Foundation Aid formula for 2015-16 that is equitable in its distribution, adequate in its funding and sustainable.”

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SSFC Executive Director Dr. Rick Timbs is available to speak with reporters and editors. Contact him at rtimbs@statewideonline.org or call Margaret McCormick at 315-373-8047 to arrange an interview.

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The Statewide School Finance Consortium (SSFC) is an organization of more than 400 public school districts whose mission is to bring equity to the distribution of New York State educational aid. SSFC membership is largely comprised of school districts from average and low-wealth communities that receive a disproportionate share of state funding in comparison to high-wealth regions of New York. The reform of the state aid process will help ensure that all of New York's children receive the same educational opportunities regardless of the wealth or location of their community. Visit us online at: www.statewideonline.org