

ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

We are committed to looking forward with a positive attitude; meeting the challenges of today with fortitude and preparing for tomorrow by taking actions now that will safeguard support for a successful future for our students and school districts. To do so, Orange County public school districts direct your attention to:

FOUNDATION AID

OCSBA is grateful to our state lawmakers for delivering on full funding of the Foundation Aid plan. As we begin the final year of the phase-in, **WE ASK THAT OUR LEGISLATORS TAKE THE IMMEDIATE STEP OF DOING A COSTING-OUT ANALYSIS TO CLARIFY THE CURRENT COST OF EDUCATING A STUDENT AND MODERNIZE THE FOUNDATION AID FORMULA.** This essential step ensures both current and future public education solvency. Some **DATA USED IN THE FOUNDATION AID FORMULA IS OUTDATED BY TWO DECADES** and doesn't consider evolving educational standards or growing student need. Pandemic related state and federal funds are ending, while inflationary pressures remain constant. A modernized formula is necessary to accommodate these factors, to ensure a responsive, stable, and predictable formula that allows school districts to responsibly plan for future needs.

CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)

OCSBA commends the Regents, NYSED, and our legislators who recognize the value and importance of expanding CTE offerings and graduation "pathways". In Orange County there has been a significant increase in the number of students wishing to take advantage of OU-BOCES' CTE programs. **WE ASK THAT OUR LEGISLATORS INCREASE THE AIDABLE CAP ON BOCES SALARIES FOR CTE INSTRUCTORS. THIS CAP HAS REMAINED UNCHANGED FOR 30 YEARS**, thereby continually increasing the costs that school districts must absorb, and likely limiting the number of students able to engage in CTE opportunities and find a worthy pathway to successful employment.

SCHOOL HEALTH & WELLNESS NEEDS

A child's best opportunity for successful academic achievement is rooted in good physical and mental health. Students face a learning disadvantage if they are hungry or have unmet physical or mental health needs. **WE URGE OUR LEGISLATORS TO SUPPORT A FREE UNIVERSAL SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM** providing reliable access to nutrition for all students, financial relief for families, and a streamlined administrative process for schools. **WE ALSO URGE LEGISLATORS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT STUDENT PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.**

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & ADAPTATION

OCSBA commends the state's effort, and recognizes the benefits gained by supporting environmentally sustainable solutions in school operations. However, **WE URGE OUR LEGISLATORS TO TAKE A MORE MEASURED APPROACH IN THE TRANSITION TO THESE BUSES, EXTENDING THE CURRENT DEADLINES** for the move to 100 % zero-emission bus fleets. **AVAILABLE FUNDING STREAMS ARE SUBSTANTIALLY INADEQUATE** to help all districts meet the state's goals, placing the remainder of expenses on school districts, whether they operate their own fleet, or contract with private bus operators. The impact of this on school budgets cannot be overstated and can leave districts with less of their budget devoted to academic programming. Plus, the volatility of electrical rates must be considered and moderated. Other issues requiring consideration include potential mileage limitations, local terrain and weather concerns, safety issues, and actual availability of buses and batteries. Extending the deadline and **CONSIDERING THE USE OF EITHER HYBRID OR NEWER/ RETROFITTED DIESEL BUSES AS PART OF THE PLAN** would allow for districts to manage this switch in a more reasonable, and financially responsible way while still furthering environmental sustainability goals.