



TESTIMONY ON GOVERNOR MURPHY'S PROPOSED FY21 STATE BUDGET TO SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Our Children/Our Schools is a statewide network of education, children's rights and civil rights organizations. OC/OS members work together to support a vision of public education that is child-centered and that provides all students with excellent and equitable opportunities to learn. More information about OC/OS is available [here](#).

In order to support the most vulnerable public school students in the FY21 State Budget, OC/OS calls on the Legislature to:

Ensure Universal Availability of On-Line Learning:

- Close the digital divide: Urgently accelerate the Murphy Administration's efforts by requiring a full and current accounting of all students without devices and/or internet connectivity and by ensuring school districts with students with technology needs do not suffer state aid cuts.

Keep Students and Staff Safe During the COVID-19 Pandemic:

- Increase support in the State Budget for school districts working to keep students and staff healthy and safe by increasing state aid to schools through the school funding formula.
- Close to 300 schools do not have a school nurse on staff. Provide these schools with funding through the school funding formula so they can meet the formula model of one nurse for every K-8 school and for every 700-800 students in large high schools.

Restore Funding for School-Based Youth Services:

- It is critical that students be able to access prevention and mental health services in their schools, rather than at off-site locations, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. OC/OS calls for the restoration of the \$11.9 million in funding to the Department of Children and Families for school-linked services.

Support Districts in Adopting Community School Frameworks to Allow Public Schools to Better Meet the Needs of the Most Vulnerable Students:

- Provide funding in the State Budget for continued development of the community schools model across the state in order to protect the most vulnerable students and families by providing them with needed educational and social services. Vulnerable students include students from low-income families (eligible for free or reduced-price meals); English Language Learners; special education students; and children who may be living in unsafe or disruptive living situations, including living situations where internet access might not be reliable.