



## Statement on School Funding in Governor Murphy's Proposed FY22 State Budget

*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](#).*

### Introduction

While recognizing the difficult fiscal situation the COVID-19 pandemic has created for the state of New Jersey, Our Children/Our Schools nevertheless is clear that adequately supporting NJ's public school children and educators has become even more crucial than ever.

This year has brought unparalleled challenges for students, families, teachers, and staff, further exacerbating inequality across schools. As representatives of educational, civic, and social justice organizations from across the state, we applaud Governor Murphy's statement in his State of the State address that, *"We won't let our students or our educators down now."*

We are united in affirming a need to preserve adequate resources in every district to allow all students and schools to re-emerge stronger from the current public health and economic emergency.

**For this reason, OC/OS proposes the following for school funding in Governor Murphy's FY22 State Budget:**

1. Continue the Murphy Administration's commitment to **full funding of the SFRA** by getting back on track to full funding as outlined in S2 legislation. This would require an annual increase in state aid of approximately \$475 million each fiscal year from 2022 through 2025.
2. **Do not cut state funding to any school district** in FY22, even those slated for adjustment aid cuts under S2, given the financial hardships and increased expenses resulting from the pandemic.

3. Do not take into account **enrollment numbers from the current school year** when determining district funding levels and ignore this year's enrollment counts going forward. These counts are an extreme anomaly resulting from remote learning and parents' decisions not to enroll their children, especially those who would have entered preschool or Kindergarten.
4. Continue the ramp up to full funding of **extraordinary special education aid**.
5. Use federal pandemic relief funds to **supplement, not supplant**, state school aid. Districts need all of the state aid owed to them, as well as supplementary funds from the federal government, to help students and staff teach and learn safely and to address their academic and social-emotional health.
6. Ensure there is **adequate funding** in the Department of Education's budget to: completely close the digital divide, provide the social-emotional supports students and staff will need, provide required compensatory special education services, meet the requirements of the recently enacted legislation enhancing the Amistad program, fully fund state-supported afterschool programs, and help students overcome current disruptions in their learning and development.

**Additionally, OC/OS urges Governor Murphy and State Legislators to propose and support the following bills during FY22 budget negotiations:**

1. **Increase SDA bonding authority** so the state's constitutionally mandated school construction program can continue to function, especially in light of the current need to remedy overcrowding, poor ventilation and other issues connected with creating safe school environments during and after the pandemic.
2. **Lift the property tax cap** on school budgets to allow below adequacy districts to increase local revenue above the 2% cap in order to speed up the timeframe to reach full funding of the SFRA's required local contribution.

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