
Testimony to the Assembly Budget Committee
Wednesday, March 25, 2020
Filed Electronically

Good morning members of the Assembly Budget Committee, I have enclosed full descriptions of the areas of concern for the nonpublic school community in the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget in the Appendices to this testimony.

They are as follows:

Nursing Services

With the advent of the Coronavirus, it is necessary that every school, public and nonpublic, have a full-time nurse. Currently, there is a bill in the New Jersey Legislature which would provide an additional \$3 million to nonpublic schools for nursing services to extend the hours in which the nurse is available. The money is in a proposed Supplemental Appropriation for Fiscal Year 2020. Heretofore, the bill has languished in the Legislature.

Nonpublic nursing services began with a \$60.00 per-pupil appropriation in the 1991-1992 school and the appropriation has only increased to \$97.00 in the current school year. ***We ask that you examine Appendix A for the full rationale for this request of additional money in the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget.***

Compensatory Education (Remedial Math, Language Arts, and Reading)

During the current school year, the New Jersey Department of Education underestimated the number of students in nonpublic schools qualifying for one or more of these three services. As a result, the per-pupil amount for each Compensatory Education service (which has been frozen since the 2008-2009 school year at \$995.33 per service) was severely underfunded. This is far from adequate for the purposes of remediating these students because many service providers are providing only **25 minutes per week** for such service. We are asking for an increase to \$1,100 per service, which does not come close to the cost increases the years in which it has been frozen. As a result of the miscalculation by the NJDOE, Compensatory Education students received only 85% of the amount listed in the Budget, hardly enough to fulfill the goal of remediating these students and having them then removed from the program. We do not want “lifers” in the Compensatory Education Program. ***Please consult Appendix B for complete details of this issue.***

Nonpublic School Transportation

Because nonpublic school transportation is the lifeblood of nonpublic schools and because 85% of our routes are operated by private bus contractors, the profit margins of these contractors prohibits the delivery of rides to and from school for many nonpublic school students. No public school student is ever denied a ride because of cost. The statutory amount for nonpublic school transportation has not kept pace with the required increase in Consumer Price Index. We are asking for a modest increase of \$50.00 per student in order to maintain rides for nonpublic school pupils. ***Please consult Appendix C for the specific rationale for our request***

I am happy to answer any questions.

I am grateful for your attention and for your assistance with these issues.

Respectfully submitted

George V. Corwell, Ed.D., Director of the Office of Education

Rationale on Request for Increased Per-pupil Amount for Nursing Services

- The threat of the Coronavirus emphasizes the need for a full-time nurse in all schools – public and nonpublic.
- The cost for nursing services for nonpublic school students is limited by statute and Budget language.
- Many small nonpublic schools do not have a full-time nurse yet nurses are the FIRST RESPONDERS in the event of an emergency.
- During the enactment of the nursing services legislation during the 1991-1992 school year, the per-pupil amount was \$60.00 per pupil. That amount has risen by only \$37.00 in the intervening years to a figure of \$97.00 during the 2019-2020 school year.
- Our goal would be to raise the per-pupil amount to at least \$132.00 per-pupil in order to cover the increased costs in the salaries of nurses, the cost of recent requirements enacted by the Legislature, and to fund the administrative costs imposed by the providers, over which schools have no control.
- Nurses are first responders in cases of emergencies of all kinds. The Legislature has created many more duties for nurses with the advent of requirements for medical conditions such as asthma and the need for Narcan, epinephrine, and various other medications which require appropriate authorization to be dispensed. These requirements all need the presence of a full-time nurse.
- A bill currently is in the Legislature to provide a supplemental Appropriation of \$3M for nonpublic nursing services in the FY '20 Budget, but there has been no movement on the bill.

Rationale for an Increase in Per-pupil Funding for Compensatory Education
(Remedial Reading, Math, and Language Arts)

- Each of these services have been capped at \$995.33 for the current school year. That figure does not take into account the “off the top” administrative costs by the provider. That cap has not been increased since the 2008-2009 school year.
- As a result of the static amount, the services have been reduced. There is no specific number of minutes per week required for each service established by the New Jersey Department of Education. When the law was first enacted in 1977, it was determined that the child should receive at least 45 minutes per week in service. However, in recent years that time has been reduced by many service providers and districts to as little as 25 minutes per week. In many instances, the class size has also been increased in these remedial programs in order to meet the statutory limit of \$995.33 per service.
- It is almost impossible to show significant effects in remediation with so little “time on task.” Our goal is to have these children remediated and not have them serve as “lifers” in the Compensatory Education programs.
- This year, a miscalculation of the number of eligible students by the NJDOE reduced the per-pupil amount by 15%, thus forcing eligible students to lose 15% of their hours of service from the onset of the program in September.
- We are asking for an increase to \$1,100 per service for qualifying students.

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