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### **Report of April 16, 2018**

As you know by now, we did get the NYS Budget approved on time again this year. The increase in State Aid (\$995 million total - \$100 million to Long Island) was as well as could be expected considering New York's current deficit budget situation. There are some interesting language/items in this year's Budget Bill including:

- Prohibition on meal shaming – all schools must develop a plan to ensure that students with unpaid meal fees are not shamed or treated differently from students who have paid their meal fees.
- Breakfast After the Bell – all schools with at least 75% of its students eligible for free or reduced lunch must offer to all students school breakfast “after the instructional day has begun”
- Farm to School Program – for school meals served in the 2019-20 School Year & beyond, the reimbursement rate for subsidy will be \$0.25 per meal that the school district can certify that at least 30% of the total food cost of that meal was from products produced on NY State farms
- Recovery High Schools – BOCES are now authorized to enter into agreements (for up to 5 years) with non-component school districts to participate in Recovery High School Programs operated by BOCES. This was one of the items that NYS PTA lobbied for this year.
- Feminine Hygiene products in Schools – all public elementary & secondary schools serving grades 6-12 must provide free feminine hygiene products in restrooms of school buildings at no charge to students.
- Excelsior Scholarship Amendments – applicants can have their applications reviewed for possible eligibility based on a change in family income when such change is based on death, permanent disability, mental disability or divorce/separation.
- NYS Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program – A new student loan forgiveness program is established for applicants that meet certain criteria. This is primarily for teachers working in hard to staff schools and/or teach in subject area shortage. Grants cannot exceed any remaining student loan debt more than \$20,000.
- Education of Children in Foster Care – new language outlines that the social service district, in consultation with the Local Education Agency (LEA) designates either the district of residence or the district of origin for attendance, whichever is deemed in the best interest of the child.
- Large School Districts will have a new reporting requirement on how they allocate their money, which is subject to review by the DOB and SED. The reporting language will expand to all school districts by 2020-21. Purportedly, this is being put in place to address inequitable school building level distribution of funds. It should be noted that the SED opposed this inclusion. School districts will not be faced with an additional bookkeeping burden.
- \$18.5 million dollars was included in the State Budget to help combat the gang problem here on Long Island, including \$4 million for an 11 member “State Police Community Assistance Team”

While not directly related to the NYS Budget, I had a “get to know you” meeting with Governor Cuomo's Aid for Suffolk County, Brian Sapp, last month. I had previously sent Mr. Sapp copies of all the NYSPTA “asks” for the upcoming school year, as well as the latest edition of Where We Stand to bring him “up to speed” on PTA positions in various matters. While our conversation was very general in nature, I did point out the situation at the State Ed Department regarding numerous unfilled positions, including the staff that reviews spending plans for Construction/Renovation Bond Issues & Smart Schools monies. I mentioned to him that the current review times (currently running 12-16 months) are completely unacceptable and he said that he would make inquiries into this. As previously reported, only a little more than \$400 million of the \$2 billion in Smart Schools money has found its way to local school districts. I also found out from a

Suffolk Superintendent that of the two individuals @ SED who performed these reviews, one is out on maternity leave. I am hopeful of setting up a formal meeting between Mr. Sapp and members of the Suffolk Region PTA Executive Board sometime soon.

On the federal level:

\* There has been a lot of talk regarding gun control issues, especially after the massive March For Our Lives rally in Washington, such universal background checks and banning of bump stocks, nothing has come to fruition, as yet. However, Congress has overwhelmingly approved a bill to improve school safety. The bill authorizes \$500 million dollars over 10 years for grants to improve training and coordination between schools and local law enforcement and help identify signs of potential violence before they occur.

\* A program that helps Long Island Law Enforcement battle the opioid epidemic, known as the “High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area” program will receive a \$26 million dollar increase in Federal funding. The money will help local law enforcement with intelligence sharing and drug investigation initiatives.

On the Suffolk County level:

- Last month I attended Suffolk County’s School Safety Forum in Hauppauge. While it was mostly an opportunity for the public to express their concerns and offer suggestions regarding this issue, it was a sign of the County’s willingness to work with and support our school districts by offering their resources when & where appropriate. A suggestion that I made personally (& one that I would like to see become a Suffolk Region PTA position) was to take full advantage of the existing Drug Free School Zone laws and advertise in PSA’s that they would be doing just that.
- The County Legislation will be discussing a bill that would add illegal drugs to Suffolk’s Social Host Law. This is something that recently was enacted in Nassau County and at the appropriate time this evening, I’d like to put a motion on the floor for Suffolk Region PTA to support this proposed legislation.

In closing, a reminder that Special Elections have been called for April 24<sup>th</sup> to fill the two Assembly seats here in Suffolk County that were vacated by Al Graf (5<sup>th</sup> District) & Chad Lupinacci (10<sup>th</sup> District). If you live in either of these two Assembly Districts, please be sure to familiarize yourself with the candidate’s positions and to go out and vote.

As always, should anyone wish to get in contact me regarding any Federal, State or County legislative issues, please know the best way to get in touch is via email. My email address is [gerardbringmann@gmail.com](mailto:gerardbringmann@gmail.com)

Respectfully submitted ... Gerry Bringmann