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- NYS PTA Legislative forum was held virtually on February 27th and was a great kick off to two weeks of lobbying for important issues regarding children. NYS PTA had five points that many dedicated advocates discussed with here local state representatives. They were/are: (1) Asking for the restoration of the \$607 Million cuts in state support to school aid; (2) Support of school based mental health programs in non-competitive funding and the restoration of cuts to state support for schools; (3) for support of the E-Learn Fund which would provide free internet to all school children ages 5-21 during the pandemic; (4) Opposition to the Legalization of Recreational Marijuana (which was rolled out as part of the budget this year). Following is the link to the NYS position papers: <https://nyspta.org/home/advocacy/advocacy-legislative-program/testimonyletters/>
- National PTA ran their Leg Con event this past week. There were training sessions held on Tuesday and Wednesday. Advocates from 48 states hit the ground running and met with their local representatives to discuss the five points set forth by National PTA. They were/are: (1) Make meaningful, robust investments in education in the next COVID relief package; (2) Increase funding for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers to at least \$20 million; (3) Include schools in any comprehensive infrastructure package; (4) Improve the federal school meal program through Child Nutrition Reauthorization and (5) Support policies which protect all students, including students from historically marginalized populations. Following is the link to the supporting papers for these asks. <https://www.pta.org/docs/default-source/files/events/legcon/2021/legcon-2021-hillasks.pdf>

- The New York State Educational Conference Board put forth their reaction to the 2021-2022 Executive Budget. It was a rather depressing read, but to be expected due to New York's current fiscal situation. It can be found here: <https://nyspta.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ECB-2021-22-Executive-Budget-Reaction-March-2021.pdf>
- The federal government passed the latest Covid Stimulus Relief package on March 10, which was the day many were lobbying on behalf of National PTA. The package extends the 15% increase to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and allows states to continue the Pandemic-EBT initiative – which gives free meals to families whose children's schools are closed – through the summer. The child tax credit will be expanded and become fully refundable. More direct payments of up to \$1,400 will be given, and weekly unemployment benefits will increase by \$300. It also allocates money as follows:
 - \$5.8 Billion – Education Stabilization Fund
 - \$4B – Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, provides relief to K-12 public schools across the State of New York.
 - \$1.4B – Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, directs funds to New York's university system, like SUNY and CUNY.
 - \$313M – Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, the governor can use these funds at his discretion to support the state's K-12 education and higher education needs related to COVID-19. Including a set aside that will be prioritized to private schools serving low-income students who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.