

S.2506 / A.3006, Part A

STAFF CONTACT : Amber Rangel Mooney | Director of Workforce Development | 518.694.4465

<p>BILL</p> <p>S.2506 / A.3006, Part A</p>
<p>SUBJECT</p> <p>Consolidation of Eleven School Aid Categories to “Services Aid” and \$393 Funding Reduction for Aid Categories</p>
<p>DATE</p> <p>February 19, 2021</p>
<p>OPPOSE</p>

The Business Council of New York State, Inc. opposes S.2506 / A.3006, Part A which would consolidate eleven existing expense-based aid categories into a new block grant called “Services Aid,” and reduce funding for these categories by \$393 million to \$3.3 billion for the 2021-2022 school year.

The “Services Aid” category would consolidate the following individual aid streams: BOCES Aid; Transportation Aid (including summer); Textbook Aid; Computer Software Aid; Library Materials Aid; Computer Hardware & Technology Aid; Supplemental Public Excess Cost Aid; Special Services Aid; High Tax Aid; Charter School Transitional Aid; and Academic Enhancement Aid.

BOCES programs across New York State have long been an engine for economic development, student success and savings for taxpayers. The regionalization and shared services with school districts has proven to be fiscally responsible and responsive to school district needs.

Long before the pandemic, the collective efforts through BOCES has paid dividends for students and taxpayers, something that needs to be continued particularly in challenging economic times. Much of BOCES behind the scenes work such as cooperative bidding or technology support has been integral to our educational systems and communities. Efforts to reduce investments in BOCES would come at the peril of students’ success and the effective use of finite taxpayer dollars.

Students also have unparalleled access to state-of-the-art Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs, many of which are connected to sectors essential to regional economic growth such as construction, manufacturing, healthcare, and transportation. BOCES CTE programs continue to grow and meet the workforce demand of regional economies across the state. Students in these programs benefit from BOCES’ partnerships with regional businesses, as they collaborate on training and education programs to meet the demands of today and prepare the workforce of tomorrow. These programs are providing the technical skills for individuals to enter careers with projected growth and competitive wages.

Throughout the uncertainty and challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, BOCES across the state took regionalization to new levels. This resulted in a lifeline for students, keeping them learning, either at school in-person or remotely, and connected to critical services such as meals, technology and mental health support. It would have been impossible for each individual school district to replicate all the supports BOCES provided on their own.

BOCES worked with districts in critical and unprecedented ways to meet the needs of the moment through a variety of services, including:

- shared food services programs providing meals to students;
- providing access to devices through a cost-effective, regional approach to purchasing;
- providing professional development opportunities for teachers including for remote learning, as well as shared curriculum and enrichment resources;
- leading the way in online videoconferencing and distance learning with equipment, support, and guidelines;
- providing access to access critical teletherapy resources through BOCES services and technical support; and
- in some regions, helping to coordinate regional childcare plans at the beginning of the pandemic in the early spring of 2020.

BOCES have and continue to provide unparalleled services to school districts and the workforce development needs of regional industry and will be relied on now more than ever to continue with their important work.

The Business Council supports BOCES CTE programs that are meeting the workforce needs of industry across New York State, and the critical cost-savings they provide to school districts. As such, the Business Council opposes S.2506 / A.3006, Part A which would consolidate eleven existing expense-based aid categories into a new block grant called “Services Aid,” and reduce funding for these categories by \$393 million, hindering their ability to continue training the workforce of today and prepare the workforce of tomorrow.