

# **PUSH FOR EQUAL FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS SERVING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

## *33 New York City Schools Closed in Five Years*

New York City families, providers, and advocates for special education programs for children with disabilities are fighting for the survival of their schools, including those at [AHRC New York City](#). Funding for these programs has drastically lagged local public schools.

Known as 4410 and 853, these programs provide New York City preschoolers and school age students, respectively, with services they need. Yet providers can't compete with public schools and their enhanced funding, salaries, and benefits. Local school districts contract with 4410 preschools to provide special education and related services, including speech, occupational, and physical therapies.

According to Chris Trieber, Associate Executive Director, Children's Services with the InterAgency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies:

- Since 2012 state aid to local school districts has increased by 46%
- During that same period, 853 Approved Schools have received a 26% increase in tuition 4410 Preschool Special Education schools have received only a 10% increase
- The vacancy rate for certified special education teacher positions is 33% for 4410 programs and 29% for 853 schools for the 2020-2021 school year, a significant increase from 16% in 2017-18.
- In the past five years lack of funding has led to **63 preschool special education programs** closings across New York State; **33 of them in New York City**.

This year, the State Education Department requested 7% increases for our schools, but the State Division of Budget approved 4%.

But bills [s6516](#) and [a8013](#) passed unanimously in the Senate and Assembly, respectively, mandating that 4410 and 853 schools receive the same increases as public school districts. It's awaiting the Governor's signature. This is a new bill, sponsored by state Sen. John W. Mannion, a Democrat from the Syracuse area. Bills containing similar provisions were introduced in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017.

"Children with special needs are as valuable and as deserving of dignity and respect as all New Yorkers and state policy and state funding needs to reflect that," said Sen. Mannion.

It's becoming impossible to recruit and retain certified special education teachers as well as assistant teachers with limited funding. Many staff members are going to local school districts, where they can earn a higher salary, work fewer months, and far better benefits.

- The current turnover rate for certified special education teachers in 853 schools is 33% and 25% in 4410 preschools.

Sen. Mannion continued, “Every child in New York State is guaranteed a sound basic education under the law and it's up to all of us to deliver it. A sound basic education can only be achieved for these students if they have the proper supports and their schools are funded at the same rate as other public schools.”

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