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“May you live in interesting times”... a saying which some claim to be a Chinese curse; whether or not that is true, it surely seems appropriate for the times in which we are living, especially in the state of New York. The state fiscal crisis is affecting us all. The Governor’s recent decision to delay payments by reducing the \$2.3 billion payment to school districts for the STAR program by 19% and \$1.5 billion in school aid payments by 10% presents, in our opinion, serious fiscal implications on the ability of local school districts to continue to provide necessary educational services to children.

Therefore, the Executive Committee unanimously passed a resolution to support the efforts of our educational partners, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA), The Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS) and the School Administrators Association (SAANYS) in bringing suit against the Governor to stop these actions. The Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) is filing an amicus brief in support of the suit, and NYS PTA has submitted an affidavit expressing our interests and concerns in this matter.

In the affidavit we stated that NYS PTA has adopted resolutions regarding funding of education and reform of state aid formulas within which we call for a funding solution for aid to school districts that is adequate, equitable, predictable, and that provides equal educational opportunities for all public school students and that urges the legislature and the governor to increase financial support of public education. It is our belief that the Governor’s actions are in direct opposition to the positions of our association.

We also shared concerns about the final paragraph of the Governor’s December 13th press release that reads: “As sufficient revenue becomes available, the State will potentially pay the amounts that were delayed. As a result, these particular December reductions represent cash-management actions, rather than a permanent elimination of liability for these specific payments. Governor Paterson will announce further actions in his Executive Budget to fully eliminate the State’s remaining current-year deficit. He also reserves the right to institute further payment delays later over the remaining months of the fiscal year in order to preserve the State’s cash position.” We believe this language opens the door for non-payment of the aid legally owed to districts or at the very least the potential that additional aid payment delays will have a negative compounding affect for school districts.

We certainly are mindful of the state’s dire fiscal condition, but we have grave concerns about whether the delayed payments will be forthcoming. There are additional concerns that since the stimulus money received by districts was intended to preserve jobs, the loss of revenue due to delayed Star and state aid payment could force districts to eliminate positions. This raises a question as to whether or not this will jeopardize the stimulus money for next year.

We all know that reductions in staffing will mean reductions in programs, which certainly means less educational opportunities for our students. We believe the students will pay the price as districts look to tighten their belts even more than they have by reducing staff and programs as they brace for the next shoe to drop. As an association whose mission and purposes are to advocate for the needs of children and youth and support public education, we felt compelled to take a stand on this issue.

Susan Lipman, NYS PTA President

