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April 18, 2018

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John Jacono
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The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thank you for championing education in our great state. More important, thank you for aiding the City of Yonkers in the past providing revenue streams to directly fund the Yonkers Public Schools. Your support and that of our legislative delegation, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, former Senator George Latimer and Assembly Members Shelley Mayer and Gary Pretlow, have enabled the Yonkers Public Schools to revitalize and improve teaching and learning for *all* of our students.

The results are magnificent for our students, the community and fiscal efficacy. Yonkers graduated 86% of the Class of 2017 (2013 Cohort), the first Big 5 school district to graduate over 80% of its students and above the State average of 82%. With your approval, a mechanism is in place to rebuild and repair our antiquated aging school buildings. Administrative operational costs have been reduced to garner more opportunities for reinvestment in our classrooms. The City and the Board of Education share services providing efficiencies with an inter-municipal agreement, resulting in a savings of over \$9 million.

The revitalization of New York's 4th largest city gains momentum every day. It's an exciting time for the City of Yonkers. A key component for dynamic and long-lasting economic development that cannot be overlooked or understated is the assurance of a strong stable public education system. Quality education attracts young families, a skilled workforce and vibrant companies and services thereby increasing local and state revenues.

Given all the facts above, to continue and sustain Yonkers Public Schools' accomplishments, we need to ensure Yonkers receives increased financial assistance immediately and in the future to mitigate our fiscal structural imbalance.

Despite the operational cost reductions and efficiencies that we have achieved, the school district's 2018-2019 proposed budget presents challenges that we cannot overcome on our own without significant staff layoffs. Our carry forward expenses are \$626 million for a status quo budget that must include an additional \$2.9 million for mandated student services. The projected revenues are \$580.7 million realized from the adopted state revenues of \$316.3 million, anticipated City of Yonkers revenues of \$261.7 million, and \$2.7 million from federal and other sources. **We are struggling to find possible solutions for a \$45.3 million gap, each option poses daunting challenges.**

- **\$16.3 million equates to laying off approximately 300 employees:** teachers, teaching assistants, guidance counselors, administrators and civil service employees.
- **\$24 million decimates our entire unassigned fund balance,** which we know is fiscally irresponsible.
- **\$5 million eliminates instructional programs.**

Our obligation is to provide a balanced budget. To accomplish this, we are willing to take the risk to absorb \$29 million by depleting our entire unassigned fund balance and eliminating instructional programs.

What we cannot bring ourselves to do is \$16.3 million in staff reductions.

It is unfair to the children of Yonkers who are some of the most vulnerable and poverty-ridden in the state. Eliminating 300 employees is an unconscionable outcome for a school district that has continually surpassed expectations and accomplished tangible academic and social/emotional progress. **To remedy this requires us to lay off staff, which must be annualized July 1, 2018 and staff notified following the May 16th Stated Meeting of the Board. Yonkers needs your assistance to avoid devastating staff reductions by appropriating an additional \$16.3 million now.**

Who are Yonkers students? Almost 27,000 prekindergarten to grade twelve students attend the District's 39 public schools and the enrollment is projected to continue to grow through 2020-2021. These students reside in Westchester County and deserve to have the same educational experiences and opportunities as their peers throughout Westchester. *Their needs are decisively greater because Yonkers students face extreme poverty and require additional academic, social and emotional supports: 79% are Economically Disadvantaged, 17% are Students with Disabilities and 12% are English Language Learners.*

Why is Yonkers Public Schools a great investment? Some examples, in addition to our 86% graduation rate, include:

- Yonkers My Brother's Keeper (MBK) movement is flourishing, receiving national attention and considered a leader and model in New York.
- Reduction in the number of Persistently Struggling Schools from 7 to 3 schools.
- 4% Drop-out rate lower than the State average of 6%, which decreased by 49% over three years.
- Annual improved results on State assessments in grades 3 – 8 in English Language Arts and Math, and the only large city school district to undertake districtwide Computer Based Testing (CBT) in both content areas starting this year.
- Increased SAT scores districtwide by 15% in Reading and 12% in Mathematics over three years.

Again, Yonkers Public Schools provides an outstanding return on investment which is validated in data-driven results. We respectfully ask you to consider our plea for an additional \$16.3 million in revenue now, so that Yonkers Public Schools can continue to sustain a strong viable teaching and learning community for the most underserved, hardworking and deserving children in Westchester County.

Sincerely,

Rev. Steve Lopez, President

Judith Ramos Meier, Vice President

Andrea Brown

Kevin Cacace

Dr. Rosalba Corrado DelVecchio

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Edgar Santana

Dr. Nader J. Sayegh

Dr. Edwin M. Quezada, Superintendent of Schools

C: Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Member Shelley Mayer, Assembly Member Gary Pretlow Mayor Mike Spano, Mike Khader, President and Members of the City Council, Robert Mujica, NY Budget