

**NYSSMA** **A State Unit of NA*f*ME**

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**NYSSMA’S 2022 LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION ITEMS**

**COVID’s Impact On Music Education in New York State**

* Tell your legislators that the Performing Arts - Band, Chorus, Orchestra and General Music were by far the subjects hardest hit by the pandemic. This is your opportunity to chat about what you had to personally do to keep your program alive and your plans for rebuilding a music education that promises a high-quality, sequential music education for all students in NYS.
* Explain how far behind your students are since they have missed so much instruction and performance experience over the past two years. Describe the disruption of the system that keeps our performance programs growing. Feel free to let the legislators know your own personal experience as a music educator during the pandemic. This is part of building a personal relationship.

**The COVID Relief Bills**

* Every district in New York State has received multiple forms of COVID relief funding. These funds are available in school years 22-23 and 23-24. Do you know how your district is utilizing these funds?
* Speak with legislators about concerns of district financial “cliffs” when these funds are no longer available. Ask if the legislator knew how much and to where these funds went in the school districts they represent in their district. Find out if there are funds that are still left to be distributed. Talk about what your program really needs right now to catch up. This is a relationship-building conversation.

**NYSSMA’S 2022 LEGISLATIVE ASKS**

**Senate Bill S4525 / Assembly Bill A1788**

* NYSSMA led the creation of these two bills. They seek to move Music Education from Regulatory to a Statutory status. These are called “same as” bills because their language is identical in both houses of the legislature. To quote from the bills each one “…Adds arts and music education as a common school branch that should be incorporated into the public-school curriculum to provide a more well-rounded education for children.”
* This is a long overdue change from the curriculum laws of 1951 and 1958, which omitted Music and The Arts. With this law in place, Music and the Arts would no longer be subject to local financial pressures. The bills specifically state that there is no financial impact associated with this legislation. To see the actual bill language and for more information, go to: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s4525>. Let your legislators know that you expect their support for these bills when they come to the floor for discussion and voting.

**State Education Arts Curriculum Associates**

* Over fourteen years ago there was an Arts Curriculum department at the New York State Education Department with a staff of six associates responsible for Music, Art, Dance and Theater. These positions were eliminated during budget crunches, leaving one, lone Curriculum Associate responsible for dealing with and answering all questions concerning the Arts, which now also includes the area of Media Arts.
* For years we have asked to have these positions reinstated as one of our primary asks. The State Education Department indicates that while the positions have been in the approved budget for several years, the Governor’s Office of the Budget has refused to release the funds to allow hiring to take place. This year they are six of 168 positions requested by the State Education Department. We must ask our legislators to insist that these positions being included in the budget and funded by the Governor’s office. We have to express our frustration and apply pressure to finally solve this problem and move forward with a fully staffed Curriculum Department to service the needs of New York State teachers and students.

**Foundation Aid Funding**

* Foundation Aid is the state funding provided to school districts based upon their enrollment in an attempt to equalize per-student funding and support unfunded mandates.
* We need to ask our legislators to continue to fund Foundation Aid so all school districts are FULLY funded by 2024 and to require the formal review and revision of the Foundation Aid Formula. This will provide for more equitable funding for districts with larger numbers of “high needs” students throughout the state. All schools need this funding, especially rural and city schools.
* Feel free to cite NYSSMA’s Belonging, Equity, Diversity and Representation initiative, which seeks to make music education accessible to all. This initiative may be found at: <https://www.nyssma.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Statement-on-Diversity.pdf>