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**Hon. George Maragos**  
*Nassau County Comptroller*

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, 12224

October 19, 2015

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The New York State (NYS) 2015 Budget funding provided to New York City (NYC) for public Universal Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) education is vastly disproportionate to monies provided to Nassau County and possibly other counties, including Suffolk. For the 2015-2016 school year, NYC will receive \$529.4 million in Pre-K funding while Nassau will receive only \$12.4 million. Essentially, NYC will receive more than 42 times as much funding as Nassau County, while having only 6 times as many 4-year-olds. **We estimate Nassau County is being underfunded by \$77 million annually.**

**Exhibit 1** below illustrates the total 2015-2016 funding awarded by NYS to NYC and to Nassau County for public universal Pre-K from different NYS funding sources.

**EXHIBIT 1: NYC vs NC FUNDING FOR UNIVERSAL PRE-K BY NEW YORK STATE**

	NYS Universal Pre-K	NYS Full Day Universal Pre-K	NYS Priority Full Day & Expanded Half Day Pre-K for High Need Students	TOTAL NYS FUNDS Earmarked for Prekindergarten
<b>New York</b>	\$ 224,946,630	\$ 294,473,665	\$ 9,997,418	\$ 529,417,713
<b>Nassau</b>	\$ 10,765,207	\$ 1,680,000	\$ -	\$ 12,445,207

**Exhibit 2** highlights the disparity in 2015-2016 funding between NYC and Nassau County in both the number of students funded and the funds provided per student. Nassau County is funded for only 20% of its 4-year old children, while NYC receives funding for 70% of its 4-year-olds. Moreover, NYS will provide \$9,053 per student to NYC while Nassau will receive less than half of that at \$4,434 per student. In the interest of fairness and equity, Nassau should have been funded at the same level as NYC (\$9,053 per student for 70% of 4-year-olds) in the 2015 NYS budget. **This equates to an additional \$77 million in Pre-K funding for Nassau County.**

**EXHIBIT 2: NC UNDERFUNDING FOR UNIVERSAL PRE-K**

	TOTAL NYS FUNDS Earmarked for Pre-K	Students to be Served Per NYS	Estimated 4-year-old Population	% 4-year-olds served to Pre-K Population	NYS Funding Per PreK Student	Total Annual Nassau County UNDER Funding
<b>New York City</b>	\$ 529,417,713	58,479	83,550	70%	\$ 9,053	\$ -
<b>Nassau</b>	\$ 12,445,207	2,807	14,118	20%	\$ 4,434	<b>\$ (77,021,971)</b>

\* NC Under Funding Calc; 70% of 14,118 students x \$9053 NYC rate - \$12,445,207 current NC Funding = (\$77,021,971)

Nassau’s disproportionate underfunding deprives our County school districts of the ability to provide significantly more Pre-K classes to 4-year-olds without burdening local taxpayers. It also deprives our children of valuable educational opportunities.

Studies of early childhood programs have shown lifelong positive effects, especially for low-income and at-risk children. These benefits include improved long-term achievement test scores and high school graduation rates, increased earnings, and reduced arrests.<sup>1</sup> More recent studies have revealed that large-scale, state-funded Pre-K programs improve children’s language, literacy, mathematics and science outcomes in elementary school, decrease grade retention (repeating a grade),<sup>2</sup> decrease special education enrollment, and sharply decrease the percentage of students who are developmentally delayed or at risk.<sup>3</sup> A comparative study of various efforts to improve high school graduation rates has shown that Pre-K is an effective and cost-efficient way to increase high school graduation rates.<sup>4</sup>

In disproportionately underfunding Nassau County school districts, NYS is unfairly restricting public Pre-K education for our youngest children and depriving them of better outcomes in school and in life. We ask for your strong support for Nassau County children when the 2016 NYS budget is determined to ensure fair and equitable funding for Nassau school districts.

Sincerely,



George Maragos  
 Nassau County Comptroller

Cc: NYS Commissioner of Education  
 All LI State Senators & Assembly Representatives  
 Nassau & Suffolk Executives  
 Nassau County Legislators  
 All LI Superintendents  
 LIA & Other Business Groups

<sup>1</sup> Heckman, James, Rodrigo Pinto and Peter Savelyev, “Understanding the Mechanisms Through Which an Influential Early Childhood Program Boosted Adult Outcomes”, Institute for the Study of Labor, Discussion Paper No. 7040, November 2012. See also: HighScope Educational Research Foundation, “Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40” (2005) and Ramey, Craig T., and Sharon L. Ramey, “Early Learning and School Readiness: Can Early Intervention Make a Difference?” MerrillPalmer Quarterly 50, no. 4 (2004): 471-491.

<sup>2</sup> Barnett, W. Steven, Kwanghee Jung, Min-Jong Youn, and Ellen C. Frede, “Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study: Fifth Grade Follow-Up,” National Institute for Early Education Research, The State University of New Jersey at Rutgers, March 20, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Bagnato, Stephen J., Jennifer Salaway, and Hoi Suen. “Pre-K Counts in Pennsylvania for Youngsters’ Early School Success: Authentic Outcomes for an Innovative Prevention and Promotion Initiative,” Pittsburgh, PA: Early Childhood Partnerships, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Belfield, Clive R., and Henry M. Levin. “Educational Interventions to Raise High School Graduation Rates,” in *The Price We Pay: Economic and Social Consequences of Inadequate Education*, ed. Clive Belfield and Henry M. Levin, Brookings Institution Press, 2007.