



Erie County Association of School Boards

Vol. 4; Issue 9; May 2025

## ADVOCACY ALLIANCE MONTHLY

YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE  
FROM YOUR LEGISLATIVE TEAM

Dear Friends,

This is the last Advocacy Alliance Monthly of 2024-2025. I worked with our Diamond Sponsor to learn how to use AI, and we created a wrap-up analysis of our priorities, comparing them to the newly passed budget.

A summer subcommittee for the legislative team has been formed to begin planning the biennial priorities survey this coming August. The information collected from this survey begins the 2025-2026 Legislative Team's September discussion to create our ECASB Takes A Stand 2025-2026 booklet. If you know of an issue we should add to our summer discussions, please email me (with a bill number if you have one) so I can add it to the summer agenda.

On the next pages, you will see a brief assessment of our main legislators and where their efforts on education are prominent. While a State budget has been agreed on, that does not mean advocacy ends until the fall. There is still much to do. Keep watching for the introduction of bills that will impact our districts, let David Lowrey and I know what you are hearing, find opportunities to build relationships with your legislators and appoint both a representative and an alternate Legislative Team member at your reorganization meetings! And be sure to let your newly elected board members know all about the priorities of your district so they too can join the voices advocating to bring funding and opportunities back to Western New York!

Yours in Advocacy,  
~Jane

## Take Note...

- ⇒ Mark your calendar for the statewide school district budget votes and elections on May 20th.
- ⇒ Mark your calendar for the Annual Dinner, June 12. Watch your Emails for more details.
- ⇒ Mandated Governance Training and Fiscal Oversight Responsibility Training are right around the corner. If you have not completed your training, this is your chance! Your District Clerk can get you registered for the events. Governance training takes place in parts, with part one on June 3 from 5:15-8:15 p.m. and part two on June 7 from 8:30 a.m. to noon.
- ⇒ Mark your calendar for Board 'N Brews on July 17 at Hamburg Brewery! Details coming to your email soon.

## Our 2024-2025 Diamond Sponsor



BLACK PASSPORT GROUP

GLOBAL INSIGHTS IN A CONNECTED WORLD

# Our Local Legislators

## How Do They Align With ECASB Priorities?

An analysis of the main New York State legislators representing Erie County—focusing on their alignment with ECASB priorities, education-related bills they've introduced, and their voting records on education matters—will assist ECASB in identifying key allies and understanding the legislative landscape in Erie County. How do they measure up for you?

### New York State Assembly Members Representing Erie County

#### William Conrad (D – District 140)

**Background:** Former educator with a strong commitment to public education.

**Alignment:** Supports equitable funding and local control in education.

#### **Education-Related Bills:**

- **A03668:** Authorizes the State Education Department to contract for a program related to teacher recruitment and retention.
- **A03420:** Creates a school budget tax cap exemption for expenditures resulting from settlement awards in civil actions brought against school districts under the Child Victims Act.

**Voting Record:** Consistently supports legislation that aligns with ECASB priorities, including increased funding and local control.

#### Crystal Peoples-Stokes (D – District 141)

**Background:** Majority Leader of the Assembly with a focus on urban education.

**Alignment:** Championed equitable funding, particularly for underserved communities.

#### **Education-Related Bills:**

- **A00389:** Allows school districts to permit home-schooled students to participate in district interscholastic sports.
- **A05790:** Lowers the voting age to 16 years; requires that students receive education in civics

and be given the opportunity to register to vote in the classroom.

**Voting Record:** Strong advocate for increased education funding and policies promoting equity in education.

#### Patrick Burke (D – District 142)

**Background:** Former Erie County Legislator with a focus on youth and community issues.

**Alignment:** Advocates for local control and opposes unfunded mandates.

#### **Education-Related Bills:**

- **A01580:** Establishes the Teachers' Fossil Fuel Divestment Act; requires the New York State Teachers' Retirement System to divest from fossil fuels.

**Voting Record:** Supports legislation that promotes environmental responsibility and public health education.

#### Patrick Chludzinski (R – District 143)

**Background:** Newly elected with a background in law enforcement.

**Alignment:** Emphasizes fiscal responsibility; cautious about increasing education spending without clear outcomes.

**Education-Related Bills:** No education-specific bills introduced to date.

**Voting Record:** Yet to establish a clear record on education policy.

#### Paul Bologna (R – District 144)

**Background:** Newly elected with a business-oriented approach to governance.

**Alignment:** Advocates for efficient use of education funds and local decision-making.

**Education-Related Bills:** No education-specific bills introduced to date.

**Voting Record:** Supports policies that fiscal responsibility in education spending.

## Our 2024—2025 Platinum Sponsors



# Our Local Legislators

Continued

fiscal responsibility in education spending.

## **David DiPietro (R – District 147)**

Background: Strong conservative stance with a focus on reducing government spending.

Alignment: Opposes unfunded mandates; supports local control.

Education-Related Bills: No education-specific bills introduced to date.

**Voting Record:** *Consistently votes against legislation that increases state mandates on local school districts.*

## **Jonathan Rivera (D – District 149)**

Background: Experience in county government with a focus on community development.

Alignment: Supports equitable funding and opposes unfunded mandates.

Education-Related Bills:

- A00120: Directs the Commissioner of Education to appoint a media literacy advisory group to study the teaching of media literacy.

**Voting Record:** *Advocates for modernizing education to include media literacy and digital citizenship.*

## **Karen McMahon (D – District 146)**

Background: Legal background with advocacy for special education.

Alignment: Strong proponent of equitable funding and local control.

Education-Related Bills:

- A00037: Establishes the "New York Individuals with Dyslexia Education Act"; implements a plan to identify and support students with characteristics of dyslexia.

**Voting Record:** *Supports legislation that addresses the needs of students with learning disabilities*

## **New York State Senate Members Representing Erie County**

## **Sean Ryan (D – District 61)**

Background: Advocate for public education and workforce development.

Alignment: Supports increased education funding and opposes unfunded mandates.

Education-Related Bills:

- S6013: Enacts the "Nurse of Tomorrow Act" to provide grants for nurse recruitment, education, and retention.

**Voting Record:** *Consistent support of legislation that increases funds for public education and workforce development programs.*

## **Patrick Gallivan (R – District 60)**

Background: Former law enforcement official with a focus on public safety and fiscal conservatism.

Alignment: Supports local control; cautious about increasing education spending.

Education-Related Bills:

- S57: Makes permanent the provisions relating to services to out-of-state school districts by Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

**Voting Record:** *Advocates for policies that promote efficiency and local decision-making in education.*

## **April Baskin (D – District 63)**

Background: Newly elected former Erie County Legislature Chair with a focus on equity and inclusion.

Alignment: Strong advocate for equitable funding and reducing disparities in education.

Education-Related Bills:

- S6013: Enacts the "Nurse of Tomorrow Act" to provide grants for nurse recruitment, education, and retention.

**Voting Record:** *Supports legislation that addresses workforce shortages in education and healthcare sectors.*

## Our 2024—2025 Platinum Sponsors



# ECASB PRIORITIES VS. NY STATE BUDGET

| ECASB Priority  | NYS Budget |
|---|------------|
| Fully Fund Foundation Aid*  | ✓          |
| Preserve 'Save Harmless' Provision                                | ✗          |
| Oppose Unfunded Mandates  | ✗          |
| Support Student Mental Health and Wellness                        | ⚠          |
| Support School Resource Officers (SROs) and Safety Infrastructure | ⚠          |
| Promote Local Control over Calendars and Operations               | ✗          |
| Increase CTE Aid and Access                                       | ⚠          |
| Increase Support for English Language Learners                    | ⚠          |
| Oppose Charter School Expansion Without Local Consent             | ✓          |
| Provide Predictable and Sustainable Funding                       | ✗          |
| Support Pre-K Expansion with Flexibility                          | ⚠          |
| Expand Access to Broadband and Digital Equity                     | ✓          |
| Ensure Transportation Aid Keeps Pace with Costs                   | ⚠          |
| Reform Building Aid and Capital Project Approval Process          | ⚠          |
| Increase Funding for Small and Rural Districts                    | ⚠          |
| Oppose Overreach in State Curriculum Mandates                     | ✗          |
| Support Teacher Recruitment and Retention                         | ⚠          |
| Support Regional BOCES-Based Shared Services                      | ✓          |

## Key:

- ✓ = Budget aligns with ECASB priority
- ✗ = Budget contradicts or undermines ECASB priority
- ⚠ = Partial or indirect alignment; may require monitoring or clarification

\* While Full-funding of Foundation Aid (\$1.43 billion increase) and a minimum 2% increase in Foundation Aid for all districts is in the budget, we cannot stop talking about foundation aid, as the process to update and improve the Foundation Aid formula is only just beginning to emerge.

## Our 2024 - 2025 Silver Sponsors





# ECASB Priorities vs. 2025–2026 New York State Budget

## A Comprehensive AI Assessment

ECASB issued its 2024–2025 advocacy priorities focused on foundational aid equity, local control, student wellness, support for Career & Technical Education (CTE), unfunded mandate relief, and other key operational concerns. The NYS Legislature recently passed the 2025–2026 state budget, which outlines numerous education-related policies, mandates, and funding allocations. This assessment compares ECASB priorities against enacted budget provisions and highlights areas of alignment, conflict, and emerging impact.

### Areas of Direct Conflict

Several key ECASB priorities appear to be in direct conflict with the enacted state budget:

- **Unfunded Mandates:** The budget introduces several new requirements (e.g., threat assessments, expanded curriculum mandates) without accompanying funding, violating ECASB's stance on fully funded mandates.

**Local Control Erosion:** Increased state-level influence over instructional time, curriculum mandates (e.g., media literacy, civic readiness and bell-to-bell cellphone ban policies), and scheduling challenges ECASB's emphasis on local governance.

### Emerging Budget Impacts Not Addressed in the 2024–2025 ECASB Priorities

The state budget introduces several initiatives not directly referenced in ECASB's priorities but which will significantly impact school districts:

#### **1. Statewide K–12 Cellphone Ban**

-Full-day ban on internet-capable personal devices.

-\$13.5M allocated for storage implementation.

-Districts must revise school policy and train staff.

#### **2. Universal Free School Meals**

-All students receive free breakfast and lunch.

-\$340M allocated; operational impacts on cafeteria staffing, planning, and logistics.

#### **3. Expansion of Dual Enrollment Programs**

-\$12.2M to support Smart Scholars, P-TECH.

-Increased administrative reporting and partnership requirements.

#### **4. Delay and Adjustment of Private School Oversight**

-Enforcement of "substantial equivalency" delayed until 2032.

-Potential implications for public-private oversight dynamics.

#### **5. Mental Health System Investments**

-\$160M for new psychiatric beds; \$16.5M for outpatient programs.

-Schools may be involved in cross-agency coordination or benefit indirectly.

#### **6. Technology and Infrastructure Grants**

-Continued Smart Schools Bond Act funding.

-Opportunities exist, but require proactive district engagement.

### Strategic Implications for ECASB and Member Districts

—**Advocacy Urgency:** ECASB must recalibrate its advocacy to address emerging mandates such as the cellphone ban and universal meal operations.

—**Policy Review:** Local boards should review operational policies and staffing models to adjust for budget shifts and mandates.

**Strategic Funding Use:** Districts should prepare to engage with grant opportunities tied to mental health, infrastructure, and early college programs.

### Conclusion

While there are areas of alignment, the overall budget reflects significant divergence from ECASB's call for local control, mandate relief, and funding stability.

This assessment can provide a foundation for ECASB's response and continued engagement.

## Our 2024–2025 Gold Sponsors



Leadership • Innovation • Commitment

