

Retiree Government Relations Update February 2024

The 2024 legislative session is off and running and filled with a few surprises that we did not expect. This summary will outline just a few of the issues that affect our members and also address **issues specific to our actively retired members**.

Three issues that continue to be of high importance for SAANYS' advocacy efforts that focus on retiree issues include the continuation of the salary cap waiver, increasing the COLA, and revisions to Tier VI. The salary cap waiver that was allowable during the past few years was not included in the governor's proposed budget. SAANYS is meeting with key legislators to extend the waiver so that retirees wishing to continue to work in schools would be allowed to earn salaries above the current \$35,000 cap. SAANYS also continues to support legislation that would increase the COLA, as well as increasing the base salary on which pensions are based. We also have been advocating for changes to Tier VI that currently required administrators to work until age 63, up to 40 years of service in order to receive their full benefits and to reduce the percentage of salary that is required to be placed into the pension system.

In other news, the most surprising issue is the governor's proposed education budget as it relates to Foundation Aid. As you may recall, last year's budget was a heralded success in that for the first time since its inception, the Foundation Aid formula was fully phased-in. This was a major policy success story in that SAANYS had been advocating for this for many years. A fully phased-in foundation aid amount impacted districts in that it was an increase in funding and just as importantly, it was to be a predictable way to anticipate funding in subsequent years. That goodwill lasted less than a year, as the governor proposes to modify Foundation Aid in her budget for this year in two ways, which dramatically impacts many of our districts. Very simply stated, the governor proposes to use a different inflation rate and eliminated the save harmless provision for school districts. These changes result in approximately half of all districts getting less state aid and increased numbers of districts being considered as save harmless. SAANYS has been very active in advocating for a final budget that remediates the governor's budget.

SAANYS is also working with the Board of Regents on a number of issues, including recommendations from the graduation measures report and certification changes. Over the years we have worked with SED to ensure that the vast roles and titles that building administrators hold are recognized as viable settings to count towards professional (permanent) certification. At this point in time, SED has proposed to merge the school building and school district leaders certifications into one Professional Administrators Certification. We have been discussing this concept with members and welcome any thoughts or questions that you may have.

Please feel free to contact Cindy Gallagher (cgallagher@saanys.org) with questions or comments on any of the above issues.