



TESTIMONY FROM THE LONG ISLAND ASSOCIATION
TO THE NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION COMMISSION

October 11, 2012

The Long Island Association (LIA) is the leading business organization in the Long Island region. The LIA's membership is comprised of small and large businesses, technology and manufacturing companies, universities, financial service firms, banks, credit unions, hospitals, media companies and sole proprietors which together employ two-thirds of Long Island's workforce. Our mission is to lead the region's development and bring together disparate factions within the community to forge regional solutions for Long Island. The LIA promotes economic development, job generating projects, affordable housing, transportation improvements, property tax relief, income and business tax reforms and reductions, as well as regulatory relief for businesses.

Long Island has some of the best public schools in the country. Our teachers work hard to educate our children and prepare them to enter college and employment. In today's world, it is imperative that increased opportunities for STEM education are available to prepare Long Island's future workforce for new, high-tech jobs and ensure that our region is economically competitive. We need to develop and train students to fill these types of jobs, start and grow their own businesses, and become the engine of a new innovation economy. The business community stands ready to be a partner to help students acquire the tools necessary to ensure the health and success of our economy.

As we strive to improve our schools and equip the future workforce, we must also address some of the impediments to economic growth. Spiraling costs are driving up property taxes for families and businesses and holding back an economic recovery. The LIA was an ardent supporter of a property tax cap and Tier VI. The tax cap has been a success and has helped rein in spending at schools, which in turn has limited costs for employers. Our state must do more. The state needs comprehensive mandate relief, both to relieve budgetary pressures on school and to improve the economy.

The rising price of pensions and health care and a variety of mandates are forcing schools to cut staff and programs. It must be a top priority for the state to repeal or roll back unnecessary mandates while ceasing to impose additional ones. Some items that must be considered carefully

are an increase in employee health care contributions, continued pension reform, and the future of the Triborough Amendment.

School consolidations and shared services are also vital to maintaining stable budgets, improving education, and spurring economic development. The state should continue to build upon then-Attorney General Cuomo's legislative efforts to achieve governmental efficiencies through the New New York Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act. There should be meaningful incentives and funding opportunities for school districts that merge as well as those that pursue cooperative service agreements.

The Long Island Association looks forward to working with Governor Cuomo, the New York State Legislature, and the New York State Education Commission in promoting reform efforts that will enhance our schools, prepare the next generation of the workforce, and improve the business climate on Long Island and throughout New York State.