

# 4201 Schools Association

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Cleary School  
for the Deaf

Henry Viscardi  
School

Lavelle School  
for the Blind

Lexington School  
for the Deaf

Mill Neck Manor School  
for the Deaf

The New York Institute  
for Special Education

New York School  
for the Deaf

Rochester School  
for the Deaf

St. Francis de Sales  
School for the Deaf

St. Joseph's School  
for the Deaf

St. Mary's School  
for the Deaf

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**We will be seen.  
We will be heard.  
We will take a stand.**

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## **DISABLED CHILDREN TAKE A STAND AT CAPITOL: Demand to be Seen and Heard by the Governor**

Nearly 1000 disabled students, parents and advocates traveled to the Capitol today to ask Governor Andrew Cuomo to abandon a proposal he has advanced as part of the proposed executive budget that would eliminate the state's direct support of eleven schools serving the education needs of the blind, deaf and severely disabled children.

While in Albany, students representing the specialized schools, located in Buffalo, Rochester, White Plains, New York City, and on Long Island delivered invitations to the Governor inviting him to their schools where he can observe first-hand why the policy is misguided.

"New York State has many problems. I realize that Governor Cuomo wants to make things better. However, taking funding away from a school that has taught me how to be independent, is preparing me for college, and addresses my classmates' various needs is simply a bad idea. I want future deaf students to have the same opportunities as I had to succeed in life. We may have a disability – but we are also taking a stand. We want to be seen; and we want to be heard," said Jaime Penzellna, a senior at Lexington School for the Deaf, located in Jackson Heights, Queens.

Under the Governor's proposal, the annual appropriation of approximately \$98 million in costs would be shifted to local school districts for expenses for approximately 1,500 children challenged with limited visual or auditory acuity; or conditions such as Cerebral Palsy, Osteogenesis Imperfecta or Spinal Muscular Atrophy. The funding provides for items such as Braille text books and publications, instruction in American Sign Language (ASL) and access to technologies that allow students with limited mobility to increase their independence through the assistance of specialized wheelchairs and computers that convert computer key strokes to conversation.

(more)

“Many of the schools serving high needs deaf, blind and severely physically disabled children were created more than 150 years ago to ensure that the education of the vulnerable is not displaced, and while that is contextually important, what is critical today is that our schools continue to provide students with the opportunity to develop a life-time of independence,” said Dr. Harold Mowl, the Superintendent of the Rochester School for the Deaf and the Chairman of the 4201 Schools Association. “As a deaf adult, who negotiates in a hearing world, I know that deaf students must learn how to excel in a world that is driven by technology and communication.”

At the Henry Viscardi School, located in Nassau County, 184 children are assisted by top-notch professionals who solve problems encountered by those with limited mobility or who are reliant on medical support of the school’s four full-time nurses for such interventions as tube feeding, airway suctioning, multiple catheterizations and blood/oxygen monitoring.

It is not unusual for a child who visits our school for the first time to realize that the challenges they have faced, perhaps since birth, are not theirs alone,” said Patrice Kuntzler, Executive Director of the Henry Viscardi School. “Our school program is designed to support high academic expectation in an environment where severely physically disabled children can achieve diplomas and go on to become actively engaged members of the community.”

The New York Institute for Special Education (NYISE), located in the Bronx and founded in 1831, provides educational services to school age children who are blind; visually or emotionally disabled; or developmentally delayed.

“The children that study at the Institute see no barrier to what they can achieve,” said Dr. Bernadette Kappen, Executive Director of the NYISE. “The foundation of that notion is literacy. By acquiring essential skills, such as fluency in Braille or the ability to read large print, allows our students access to knowledge and to be independent thinkers. That is the key to ensuring that obtaining and retaining a job is not a dream but an expectation. These skills simply cannot be adequately taught in a mainstream environment.”

Parents of children in these schools often reference the struggles their children encountered when being mainstreamed.

Denise Stropkay, a North Hempstead resident and the parent of a Viscardi student said, “My school district told me that they were -- *done with academics* -- that my daughter would never pass a state exam. She has passed five of them since she arrived here. Now she has a promising future.”

The New York State School Boards Association joined the 4201 schools in opposing Governor Cuomo’s proposal.

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Timothy G. Kremer, Executive Director of the New York State School Boards Association said, “The state’s financial commitment that supports 4201 schools cannot be shifted onto the backs of local taxpayers without jeopardizing the future of the children enrolled in these schools. Certainly the governor must know that failure to educate these students would dramatically increase the state’s future social services costs. The plan to eliminate state support for our most severely challenged students is unconscionable. It must be rejected by the legislature.”

The 4201 Schools Association may be accessed on the web at:

<http://4201schoolsassociation.wordpress.com/>. It includes the following schools:

**New York City and Northern Suburbs:**

Lavalle School for the Blind (Bronx)

<http://www.lavelleschool.org/default.asp>

Lexington School for the Deaf (Jackson Heights, Queens)

<http://www.lexnyc.org/>

New York Institute for Special Education (Bronx)

<http://www.nyise.org/index.html>

New York School for the Deaf (White Plains, Westchester County)

<http://www.nysd.net>

St Francis DeSales School for the Deaf (Brooklyn)

<http://www.sfdesales.org/>

St. Joseph’s School for the Deaf (Bronx)

<http://www.sjsdny.org/>

**Long Island:**

Cleary School (Nesconset, Suffolk County)

<http://www.clearyschool.org/>

Henry Viscardi School (Albertson, Nassau County)

<http://www.henryviscardischool.org>

Mill Neck Manor School for Deaf Children (Mill Neck, Nassau County)

<http://www.millneck.org/>

**Western New York:**

St. Mary’s School for the Deaf (Buffalo, Erie County)

<http://www.smsdk12.org/>

Rochester School for the Deaf (Rochester, Monroe County)

<http://www.rsdeaf.org/>