



PRESS RELEASE
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School Psychologists Concerned About School Districts' Use of Funds to Enhance Mental Health Supports Under the American Rescue Plan

ALBANY, NY: Last Thursday, the New York Association of School Psychologists (NYASP) President, Beth Rizzi, raised concerns about the use of COVID Relief funding by schools to address children's mental health needs during a hearing in front of the New York State Senate. President Rizzi was invited by Senator Shelley B. Mayer and Senator John Liu to provide testimony at the Senate Education, New York City Education, and Budget Revenue Committees' public hearing on September 30th, 2021. The purpose of the joint public hearing was to review how school districts are spending Foundation Aid Increases and federal funds under the American Rescue Plan (ARP). School districts receiving more than 10% or \$10 million in Foundational Aid must adopt a plan dictating how funds will be utilized. This plan must include input from parents, teachers, and community members (www.nysenate.gov).

In her testimony, President Rizzi outlined the integral role that school psychologists play in supporting the mental and behavioral health of children. Their extensive training in a variety of factors related to learning, social-emotional skills, and development prime them to intervene effectively in a number of ways related to the impact of COVID-19 on learning. President Rizzi also presented results from a survey created by NYASP, in which school psychologists responded to questions related to how funds have been implemented in their school districts. President Rizzi presented specific examples of how funds were being utilized, such as hiring additional mental health staff, implementing restorative justice practices, and offering parent groups. However, based on survey results, it was noted that there are inconsistencies across the state in how funds are being applied to address social and emotional needs. In addition, it was recommended that the legislature consider the long-term effects of the pandemic and continue to include a plan for mental health support in future funding.

President Rizzi added, "NYASP is encouraged by the general trend on how school districts are using ARP funds. However, without specific accountability measures and progress monitoring tools, significant concern exists regarding the inconsistent application of funds to support student's social and emotional needs. We are concerned that this funding stream will replicate similar programs in the past, where well-resourced school districts will be able to expand and enhance mental health supports, while low resource districts will continue to struggle to meet basic social and emotional programming."

To read the full testimony by Beth Rizzi, NYASP President, go to: [Link](#)

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Respectfully submitted by Courtney Huguenin, NYASP Public Relations Chair