

**For Immediate Release:**

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**SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT AND ADMINISTRATORS WILL TESTIFY TODAY  
IN ALBANY**

*They will ask for budget parity and capital funding for schools serving deaf, blind and severely physically disabled students.*

A visually impaired special education student will join school administrators in Albany to ask the Legislature to restore and maintain state budget parity for 11 schools serving blind, deaf and severely physically disabled students in New York.

Vivian Higuita, AGE, a visually impaired junior at New York Institute for Special Education in the Bronx, will testify before the Joint Legislative Committee Elementary & Secondary Education. She will describe her experiences as a student who has undergone several surgeries to help improve her vision and how technology is important in a learning environment, including specialized education.

“Without the benefits of numerous surgeries, technologies and specialized instruction I would not be able to read, write or solve complex math problems,” she said. “I am here today because I want to be a participant in the process. Today is my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday; I will vote for the first time this fall, and I am committed to lending my voice to advocate for all children at our schools who are blind, deaf or severely physically disabled.”

Higuita will be joined by Bernadette Kappen, Ph.D., 4201 Schools Association chairwoman and executive director of The New York Institute for Special Education, as well as Tim Kelly, association vice-chair and superintendent of St. Mary’s School for the Deaf in Buffalo.

The association will ask lawmakers to maintain special education funding that is on par with public schools. The governor’s proposed budget recommends an additional investment in public education.

“We hope that while you discuss and negotiate the state budget you will consider the needs of the students at our schools,” Kappen said. “We are seeking budget parity today and into the future – funding that is on par with all public schools across New York. Similar to last year, we recommend that an increase be provided directly to the schools and be considered ongoing operational support. A direct increase also ensures that local school districts are not adversely impacted by the state’s investment.”

The 4201 Schools Association is also requesting a total of \$11 million is state funding for capital improvements and maintenance.

*The 4201 Schools Association represents 11 private, state-supported schools that serve blind, deaf or severely physically disabled students. The “4201 schools” are so known because of the section of New York State Education Law (§4201) that grants their funding. Students in 4201 schools receive a quality education in a supportive and challenging setting from teachers and staff with specialized training and experience. Students*



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

*Meeting the  
educational needs  
of New York's  
blind, deaf and  
physically disabled  
children.*

*develop emotional, social and cognitive abilities that are crucial to their success. The schools also provide extracurricular activities, leadership opportunities and mentoring.*

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