

Senator/Assemblyman  
Legislative Office Building  
Room  
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Senator/Assemblyman,

This letter is sent to express our concerns over the proposed changes written into the 2010-2011 Executive Budget with regard to §1104 of the Education Law. This Law determines the amount of State Aid paid to County Vocational Educational and Extension Boards. The amendment seeks to change the language to “the amount computed by the commissioner based upon an *assumed annualized salary*”, which in effect would reduce the State Aid by 33% due the Vocational Education and Extension Board of Suffolk County. The State Education Department had been wrongly using “salary annualization” for the past few years. This was confirmed by the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court on December 24, 2009 (ref. 507581) stating “the Department’s calculations were based upon a strained interpretation of the statutory language”.

The Vocational Educational and Extension Board of Suffolk County oversees the operation of the Suffolk County Fire Academy and is responsible for training the 11,000 “volunteer firefighters” who staff the 109 fire departments in Suffolk County. These reductions in State Aid have adversely affected the organization’s ability to provide the level of training the volunteers justly deserve. To put this in perspective, the State Aid award calculated by “annualized salaries” has resulted in the reduction of over 20,000 student training hours. At a time when fire departments are actively recruiting new volunteers, the Fire Academy will be unable to meet these training requirements. Reductions in fire training affect the safety of the firefighters and the people they have sworn to protect, the “Taxpayers of New York State”.

We urgently request no amendments be made to §1104 of the Education Law due to the dire effect it will have on the “Volunteer Fire Service”.

Yours Truly,