

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOUTH ORANGE AND MAPLEWOOD, NJ
PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
September 21, 2020**

FOR ACTION

RESOLUTION 4054

**SUBJECT: RESOLUTION URGING CONTINUED STATE FUNDING OF THE SCHOOL
 BASED YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM (SBYSP)**

WHEREAS, the School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP), administered by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, provides students – in a school setting – with critically important supports, such as mental health counseling, employment counseling, substance abuse education and prevention, preventive health awareness, primary medical linkages, and learning support; and

WHEREAS, the SBYSP, in which nearly 100 New Jersey school districts participate, has a proven record of success and has achieved positive results for students and parents across the state; and

WHEREAS, the SBYSP is one of the state’s most effective efforts to serve the mental health and social-emotional needs of students and their families; and

WHEREAS, during the current public health crisis, which has increased isolation and anxiety, these services should not only be maintained, but also strengthened and expanded; and

WHEREAS, in state Fiscal Year 2020, school-linked services were funded at almost \$15.3 million and were originally expected to receive in an increase in funding to nearly \$17 million when the Governor unveiled his original Fiscal Year 2021 budget proposal in February; and

WHEREAS, when the Governor issued his revised FY2021 budget plan on August 25, he proposed cutting the funding for school-linked services to less than \$5 million, and the SBYSP is expected to be completely eliminated at the end of September 2020; and

WHEREAS, the proposed cuts to the SBYSP have sparked an outcry from the educational community, and many local boards of education oppose this drastic departure from the Governor’s original budget proposal and the change in the state’s funding priorities; and

WHEREAS, while these financially difficult times will require difficult choices to be made to address the economic realities brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, cutting the critical services provided through the SBYSP is not an appropriate way to meet these budgetary challenges; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey School Boards Association has conducted extensive research into programming that promotes the health and wellness of students, and believes that the SBYSP plays a critical role in supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of students; and

WHEREAS, the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education recognizes the importance of maintaining funding for the SBYSPP so that student and parents may continue receiving the critical services provided through the program.

WHEREAS, over the last 15 years, our School Based Programs have provided services for more than 500 students each year. They offer vital suicide-prevention services, mental health counseling services and peer support programs. Counseling groups enable students to discuss challenges such as dating violence, bereavement and bullying. The available student homework help, as well as the job and college preparation supports, are crucial to our school community. Perhaps most importantly, the various programs provide students with a safe place, offering a sense of belonging and connection so critical to many disengaged students.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education urges the State Legislature and the Governor to reverse the cuts to the School Based Youth Services Program contained in the Governor's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2021, and to maintain and increase funding for the program beyond the next fiscal year; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be delivered to Governor Phil Murphy, Commissioner of the NJ Department of Children and Families Christine Norbut Beyer, State Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, and the 27th Legislative District's representatives in the state Senate and General Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to the New Jersey School Boards Association.