

# Report: Tax cap leaves little room for schools

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(Photo: GETTY IMAGES)

ALBANY - If schools want to stay within the state's property tax cap this year, their revenue won't see much of a jump.

A report Wednesday from the state Association of School Business Officials looked at the state's tax cap and how it will impact school revenues, finding that an average district with average needs would see a bump of just \$15 per student -- from \$12,848 to \$12,863 -- if they raise their tax levy to the limit.

Due to slow inflation, schools can only raise their tax levy by 0.12 percent this year

(/story/news/politics/politics-on-the-hudson/2016/01/20/schools-property-tax-cap-year-012/79052434/) if they

want to stay within the tax cap. Exceeding the cap is a risky proposition (/story/news/education/2015/02/11/new-york-school-districts-tax/23244119/): It would 60 percent of voters to approve it.

"State policymakers need to recognize that our costs are rising more than 0.12%, like health care, pensions and special education, and school districts cannot cover these added costs without a significant increase in state aid," Michael Borges, the association's executive director, said in a statement.



Statewide independent school districts can raise an additional \$4 million with the existing .12 percent Tax Cap, a difference of \$39 million would benefit the most under a flat 2 percent Tax Cap. Funds lost million in the North Country to \$157.8 million in districts on Long

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Groups representing schools have clashed with state lawmakers and Gov. Andrew Cuomo over the property tax cap, which was installed in 2011 and limits their annual levy increases to the lower of 2 percent or the rate of inflation.

Cuomo has touted the cap for slowing the growth of property taxes in New York, which are perennially ranked among the highest in the nation, and has proposed spending an extra \$960 million in education aid in his \$145 billion budget proposal. New York also spends the most of any state on education on a per-pupil basis -- about \$19,818 in 2013, [according to the U.S. Census Bureau \(https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-98.html\)](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-98.html).

"We make no apologies for enacting a tax cap that broke the cycle of skyrocketing property tax increases, saved property taxpayers \$4.5 billion alone in 2015 and helped ensure that New York is no longer the high tax capital of the world," Cuomo spokesman Rich Azzopardi said. "Also, as enacted, districts are able to exceed the cap with the consent of their residents."

The report Wednesday found the average "high-need" school district -- schools that rely on high amounts of state and federal revenue, rather than taxes -- would be able to raise their tax levy by just \$10 per student, from \$8,081 to \$8,091.

For "low-need" districts -- generally found in wealthier, suburban areas -- the average lax levy bump would work out to \$27, from \$21,911 per student to \$21,938, according to the report.

Regionally, the numbers differ slightly. For the Southern Tier, the average district would be able to increase their per-student levy from \$8,689 to \$6,699, the report found. In the Finger Lakes area, including Rochester, it would jump from \$10,055 to \$10,067, a \$12 increase.

In the Hudson Valley, the tax cap would allow the average district to increase the per-student levy from \$18,287 to \$18,309, according to the report.

School organizations have urged lawmakers to adopt a straight 2 percent cap, which would get rid of the inflation requirement that is keeping them down.

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