

## ISSUES:

**PRIORITY #1 - Nonpublic school transportation.** The ceiling for nonpublic school transportation has been frozen at \$884.00 since the 2007-2008 school year. This situation means that districts and/or private bus operators cannot bid routes at beyond \$884.00 per pupil. Please note the enclosed Talking Points for discussing nonpublic school busing with legislators and other interested individuals.

**PRIORITY #2 - Governor Christie's proposed 2018 Budget cut \$9 million from nonpublic school aid reducing it from \$95.5 million to \$86.5 million.** Included in the cuts were the elimination of the entire Nonpublic School Security Program which had been funded at \$50.00 per student and the elimination of increases in nonpublic school nursing services and technology aid. Please note the enclosed talking points for discussing these accounts with legislators and other interested individuals.

**OUR POSITION:** The New Jersey Catholic Conference and the New Jersey Network of Catholic School Families seek:

1. To increase the \$884.00 by moving funds currently in the Fiscal Year 2018 Governor's Budget. **This is the major issue for the Catholic schools.**
2. To restore the \$9 million removed from the nonpublic school accounts in the Governor's Budget at least to the level of funding in the Fiscal Year 2017 Appropriations Act.

## ACTION TO BE TAKEN:

1. Call, write, or email the members of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee and the Assembly Budget Committee (see enclosed list) and ask them to increase the \$884.00 to compensate for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases over the last 11 years. If your district does not have legislators on either of the Committees, call, write, or email your legislator and ask that they speak with members of those two committees in order to increase the funding. This task could be accomplished by shifting funds in the current Governor's Budget without increasing the overall budget.
2. Call, write, or email the members of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee and the Assembly Budget Committee (c.f. enclosed list) and ask them to restore the cuts in nursing, technology, and security for the 2017-2018 school year. If your district does not have legislators on either of the Committees, call, write, or email your legislator and ask that they speak with members of those two committees in order to restore this aid.

THIS IS NOT A ONE AND DONE CAMPAIGN. WE WILL NEED TO FOLLOW-UP A NUMBER OF TIMES OVER THE NEXT THREE MONTHS IN ORDER THAT THE ISSUES REMAIN A PRIORITY IN THE MINDS OF THE LEGISLATORS.

You may use the New Jersey Catholic Conference Faith in Action - Voter Voice system  
which can be accessed at:

<https://www.votervoice.net/NJCC/Campaigns/51277/Respond>

**Important information regarding the attached Action Alert:**

1. The New Jersey Catholic Conference's priorities are twofold:
  - a) An increase in the ceiling for nonpublic school transportation which can be facilitated by moving money from accounts in the Nonpublic School Budget; and
  - b) A restoration of the money eliminated from the nonpublic school accounts as a result of the Governor's Budget numbers for Fiscal Year 2018.
2. The key people that will sponsor Budget Modifications are the Majority members of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee and the Assembly Budget Committee. The Minority members may want to sponsor Budget Modifications, but they are normally not accepted by the Majority members.
3. All legislators become crucial in the sense that, if they are not member of the respective Budget Committees, they should be able to inform their colleagues who are of the importance of our issues.
4. The Voter Voice system is an easy method of making our voices heard. Please try to increase these numbers as soon as possible and ask family members repeat the process during the upcoming weeks. The link for Voter Voice is included in the Alert.

# N.J. nonpublic schools at risk of losing security money

Nicholas Pugliese, State House Bureau, @nickpugz Published 6:06 a.m. ET March 27, 2017 | Updated 8:04 a.m. ET March 27, 2017



(Photo: Nicholas Pugliese/northjersey.com)

In a time of increasing anxiety over hate crimes and acts of intimidation targeting minorities, women, gays and other groups across the country, Gov. Chris Christie appears to be sending mixed signals about the importance of state financing for security at New Jersey's hundreds of religious nonprofits and nonpublic schools.

At a news conference last week, Christie announced a [\\$1 million grant program \(https://www.njhomelandsecurity.gov/securnj\)](https://www.njhomelandsecurity.gov/securnj) to help pay for security upgrades at nonprofits facing potential threats in nine of New Jersey's southern counties. Nonprofits in the state's 12 other counties are already eligible for [similar grants \(http://archive.northjersey.com/news/feds-fund-enhanced-security-for-north-jersey-non-profits-1.1626343\)](http://archive.northjersey.com/news/feds-fund-enhanced-security-for-north-jersey-non-profits-1.1626343) from the federal government.

"Recent incidents of bomb threats over the past several weeks at Jewish community centers in New Jersey and across the nation have demonstrated our vulnerability to this type of intimidation," Christie said. "By making these additional resources available, it's another really crucial step in our efforts to enhance security for everybody in New Jersey."

But in his budget proposal for the 2018 fiscal year, Christie has zeroed out security aid for nonpublic schools — down from \$7.5 million, or \$50 per pupil, in the current fiscal year. Many such schools are religiously affiliated nonprofits — exactly the type of institutions the new grant program is intended to benefit.

[Christie vows to combat hate](http://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2017/03/03/christie-vows-combat-hate/98668650/)

[\(http://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2017/03/03/christie-vows-combat-hate/98668650/\)](http://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2017/03/03/christie-vows-combat-hate/98668650/)

[Trump looms large in first hearing on 2018 state budget](http://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2017/03/15/legislature-begins-months-long-slog-pass-2018-budget/99203704/)

[\(http://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2017/03/15/legislature-begins-months-long-slog-pass-2018-budget/99203704/\)](http://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2017/03/15/legislature-begins-months-long-slog-pass-2018-budget/99203704/)

[School funding concerns dominate N.J. budget debate](http://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2017/03/21/school-funding-concerns-dominate-nj-budget-debate/99467114/)

[\(http://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2017/03/21/school-funding-concerns-dominate-nj-budget-debate/99467114/\)](http://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2017/03/21/school-funding-concerns-dominate-nj-budget-debate/99467114/)

"For the governor to actively take out that line item makes no sense, it's bad, and it could have the most disastrous effect," said Assemblyman Gary Schaer, D-Passaic, who led the push for the security aid in the current budget. "Let's understand that children's lives are at risk here. That's literally what it comes down to."

Jacob Toporek, executive director of the New Jersey State Association of Jewish Federations, said Christie deserved praise for working closely with New Jersey's faith leaders during his tenure as governor and for strengthening the state's counterterrorism and bias crime units. Toporek also noted that in each of the last two budget cycles, Christie had proposed zero funding for nonpublic security aid, later ceding to lawmakers' call to provide money.

Reached for comment last week, a spokesman for the state's Treasury Department signaled that the same dynamic may occur again this year.

"In the past, funding for security aid has been included by the Legislature in the appropriations act, and there will be an opportunity for a similar discussion prior to the budget's signing," Willem Rijksen, the spokesman, said in a statement. Christie and the Legislature must pass a balanced budget by July 1.

But several faith leaders said last week that the need among nonpublic schools for security aid is beyond question.

"To say that we are stunned and disappointed would be an understatement," Avi Schnall, New Jersey director of Agudath Israel of America, a nonprofit, said at a Senate budget hearing. At a time of rising anti-Semitic attacks and threats nationwide, he said, "this is a time to increase private school security."

## Reported hate crimes rising

FBI data support the common perception that the threats facing various communities is increasing. Reported hate crimes in the United States jumped 6 percent, to 5,818, in 2015 over the previous year, according to the bureau's most recent [Hate Crime Statistics report \(https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015/home\)](https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015/home), the most comprehensive look at bias-motivated incidents nationwide.

Those incidents included firebombings, assaults, vandalism and threats that authorities said were motivated by racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation and other forms of bias. Notably, the data showed a 67 percent jump in reported attacks against Muslim Americans — to 257 in 2015 from 154 in 2014.

In New Jersey alone, there have been 45 instances of “anonymous threats to and suspicious activity around” Jewish, Islamic and Christian organizations since the beginning of the year, New Jersey Homeland Security Director Chris Rodriguez said last week. He declined to provide further details about the incidents, but several [bomb threats at Jewish community centers in Bergen County \(/story/news/bergen/tenafly/2017/01/09/tenafly-gets-all-clear-after-bomb-threat/96356586/\)](#) and elsewhere, as well as [threats against New Jersey mosques \(/story/news/new-jersey/2017/03/03/new-jersey-mosques-face-threats/98692844/\)](#), have recently made headlines.

Critics of President Donald Trump often point to his language on the campaign trail as having enabled or even encouraged bias and violence. At one point he called for a “total and complete shutdown” of Muslims entering the country, for example, and promised to pay the legal fees of any supporter who were to “knock the crap” out of a protester.

But Rodriguez cautioned against reading too much into the type of data contained in the FBI report.

“We don't know whether it's actually an uptick in incidents or an uptick in reporting of those incidents,” Rodriguez said. “I think sometimes one is tempted to correlate political rhetoric with incidents, but as my office has looked back with the FBI in terms of looking at trends ... they have remained relatively consistent.”

Rodriguez did say, however, that the threats facing religious, minority and other communities in the United States are real and rapidly evolving.

“What has been clear is that acts of terrorism both here and abroad reflect a dramatic shift in our threat and risk landscape, one in which the risks are becoming much more decentralized and diffuse than they've ever been,” Rodriguez said. “What we've seen certainly in cases of homegrown violent extremism is that small security enhancements can act as a deterrent for people to conduct attacks.”

## Other sources of money

The [\\$1 million grant program \(https://www.njhomelandsecurity.gov/securnj\)](https://www.njhomelandsecurity.gov/securnj) announced by Christie last week will cap individual awards at \$50,000 a year to be used by nonprofits for such physical security upgrades as surveillance systems, controlled-entry systems, fencing or ballasts.

It will be paid for in the current fiscal year by the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness using existing funds, Rodriguez said.

The security aid for nonpublic schools, meanwhile, can be used for a wider range of security needs, like personnel, cameras or technology, Schaer said.

Schaer said the \$50 per nonpublic school student provided for in the current budget compares with an average of \$144 per student that public schools receive.

“We as a society need to protect our children no matter what school they go to,” Schaer said.

In total, Christie's proposed 2018 budget cuts \$9 million from nonpublic school aid — to \$86.5 million from \$95.5 million.

“The governor's proposed budget for [fiscal year 2018] maintains its commitment to nonpublic schools, recommending \$86.5 million for textbooks, transportation aid, nursing services, handicapped aid, technology and other programs,” Rijkssen, the Treasury spokesman, said in a statement.

The Legislature is working along a separate track to provide another source of financing for nonprofits that are susceptible to threats. Under [a bill \(http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2016/Bills/A4500/4253\\_R1.HTM\)](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2016/Bills/A4500/4253_R1.HTM) that the Assembly passed 61-10 with three abstentions last week, eligible nonprofits around the state would be able to apply for up to \$10,000 a year to pay for security personnel.

The measure would appropriate \$3 million over three years for the program. It has yet to receive a vote in the full Senate.

Last year, 58 nonprofits in New Jersey — the vast majority of them Jewish — were awarded \$4.3 million through the federal [Nonprofit Security Grant Program \(http://archive.northjersey.com/news/feds-fund-enhanced-security-for-north-jersey-non-profits-1.1626343\)](http://archive.northjersey.com/news/feds-fund-enhanced-security-for-north-jersey-non-profits-1.1626343) to help them improve security. The grants topped out at \$75,000 per institution.

## Talking Points for Nonpublic School Transportation

- Nonpublic school transportation must currently be provided at \$884.00 per student or less. The ceiling has not been raised since the 2007-2008 school year and continues at that figure under the Governor's proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2018.
- Most nonpublic school transportation is provided by private bus companies. Many of the companies either do not bid on a route at \$884.00 or less or have already indicated that they can only bid at a higher rate.
- Without transportation, parents are often unable to get their children to school, even though an aid-in-lieu amount is paid to the parent for \$884.00. Many of these parents work two and three jobs in order to cover the nonpublic school tuition. When a bus route is cancelled because of the bid ceiling, many nonpublic school students are forced to transfer to a public school at greater taxpayer expense. **It is important to note that no public school student is ever denied transportation as a result of the cost.**
- It would be possible to shift money from another Budget account that is over-funded and transfer it to the cost of increasing nonpublic school transportation. Districts and private bus company operators indicate that the reason for their inability to run a route at or below the maximum per-pupil amount is that, in spite of reductions in fuel costs in recent years, drivers' salaries and insurance premiums have increased.

*The effort to increase the ceiling for nonpublic school transportation can be made in various ways including class projects for letter writing and visits to appropriate legislators.*

*Any trips to Trenton made between now and June by individual classes should include an opportunity to speak to legislators about the status of nonpublic school transportation.*

## **Talking Points on Cuts in Nursing, Technology, and Security**

Governor Christie's Budget eliminated \$9 million in nonpublic school aid in the areas of nursing, technology, and security, in effect negating the increases provided by the Legislature in the Appropriations Act of July 2016 for the 2016-2017 school year.

- Nursing is essential to nonpublic schools because the Legislature keeps adding more requirements for the schools, which are the responsibility of the school nurse.
- It is important to tell legislators the story of how needed the nurse is in your own school and how these cuts will affect that service.
- The Nonpublic School Technology program has been funded in a sporadic fashion since the 1998-1999 Budget cycle.
- The effects of the cuts in the technology program should be described to legislators when asking at least for return to the funding levels of this school year.
- The Nonpublic School Security Program, funded at \$50.00 per pupil in June 2016, was completely eliminated in the Governor's Fiscal Year 2018 Budget.
- Nonpublic school pupils deserve the same security provisions as their public school counterparts. Security provisions have already been put in place by the nonpublic schools with the previous year's funding. Please describe in detail these uses to the legislators when arguing the case for restoring the funding and note what security provisions are still lacking.

***The effort to increase Nursing Services funding, the Nonpublic School Technology Initiative, and the Nonpublic School Security Program to their previous level of support can be made in various ways including class projects for letter writing and visits to appropriate legislators.***

***Any trips to Trenton made between now and June by individual classes should include an opportunity to speak to legislators about the status of Nursing Services, the Nonpublic School Technology Initiative, and the Nonpublic School Security Program.***

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2016-2017**

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Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee

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April 4, 2017