



Memo in Support

S.8148/A. 8953 (Gounardes/Jacobson)

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to enacting a universal financial aid policy

NAF strongly supports S.8148/A. 8953 (Gounardes/Jacobson) which would require high school seniors across the State to complete FAFSA and TAP applications (or a waiver).

NAF is a national nonprofit organization that aims to address economic and social disparities by bringing schools and businesses together to better prepare students of all backgrounds and capabilities for college, a career, and future success. For over 40 years, NAF has partnered with high schools in historically under-resourced communities to enhance school systems by implementing NAF academies – small, focused learning communities within traditional public high schools themed around growing industries, including engineering, finance, health sciences, information technology, and hospitality and tourism. NAF currently supports over 113,000 students annually, with 72% of all students identifying as Black/Hispanic and 67% of students coming from low-income backgrounds. In New York State, NAF works with 38 high schools reaching nearly 8,800 students.

Students enrolled in NAF academies are exposed to career paths and opportunities through industry-specific curriculum and work-based learning opportunities. The aim of these experiences is to identify a pathway after high school and ensure students are aware of the steps needed to achieve that pathway – including postsecondary education options. Completing the FAFSA and TAP applications is a necessary step for many of NAF's students to advance their career aspirations, as affordability of postsecondary options must be considered early on. Unfortunately, students are often overwhelmed or unaware of this necessary step in pursuing postsecondary education and therefore are missing out on opportunities for financial assistance to further their educational goals.

NAF fully supports the above legislation that will make submitting the FAFSA and TAP applications, or a waiver, a requirement for all high school students. We believe this requirement will ensure more students are aware of the postsecondary funding opportunities that are available to them and can therefore make an informed decision when it comes to their educational and career opportunities. However, NAF encourages New York State to make certain adequate resources are provided to school districts in fulfillment of this requirement. Additional administrative resources will be needed to assist students and their families in completing the FAFSA and TAP forms as well as additional resources for schools to increase their general awareness about the requirement in the coming years.

For these reasons, NAF supports S.8148/A.8953 and encourages the Legislature to pass this legislation while also providing adequate resources to school districts to implement this requirement.

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