

APPENDIX

Assembly Education Committee School Funding Testimony
Scott Kipers, Business Administrator, Camden County Technical School District
February 7, 2017

Welcome to the Camden County Technical School District. The Camden County Tech family is thrilled to be hosting this legislative hearing. We appreciate that the Legislature takes so much interest in public education and is examining school funding in such a comprehensive manner.

Camden County Technical School opened its doors in 1928 and is one of the first county vocational school districts in the State of New Jersey. In the last 89 years, the district has prepared thousands of students for successful careers and has grown to 2,000 plus students at two campuses. Our student population serves all of Camden County, the majority of our students being from Camden City, Pennsauken, Winslow Township and the municipalities that make up the Black Horse Pike Regional District. As such, approximately 65% of our students are receiving free or reduced lunch.

Camden County Tech and the other county vocational-technical school districts have a unique mission, which is to integrate career-focused technical training with academic instruction and extracurricular experiences so that students will be prepared for careers as well as college.

The Camden County Technical Schools provide a broad range of career programs, including STEM, health careers, homeland security, construction technology careers, automotive technology, business, and performing arts. Our ability to keep pace with industry demands, support economic growth, and prepare our students for the jobs of tomorrow is dependent on sufficient resources for our academic and career programs.

County vocational-technical school costs are higher than traditional high school costs due to the additional teachers, supplies and equipment needed for career programs. We must continually update these programs to keep them aligned with industry standards and emerging employer needs so that our students will be ready for success in the workforce.

When entering our district, many of our students are several grade levels behind in their academic subjects. Intensive learning supports, and our focus on character education and career readiness, enable our students to be successful. We have a 95% graduation rate. In addition to meeting all of the academic requirements for graduation, students develop technical skills, obtain industry certifications, and gain work experience. Many earn college credits as part of their career program, and about 80% of our students go on to a two- or four-year college after graduating from Camden County Technical Schools.

Camden County Tech and other county vocational schools are part of the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA), but as county-based school districts, we are funded a little bit differently. In Camden County, about 55% of our funding comes from the state through the SFRA, and our local funding comes from the county (25%), local districts (14%), and a small amount from federal and other sources.

Like many districts, Camden County Tech has struggled with stagnant funding for the past seven years. Not only has our state funding remained relatively flat, but so has the portion of our funding provided by the Freeholder Board. Unlike local districts, we simply do not have the ability to increase our tax levy each year. We charge local districts a relatively modest tuition as their local share, and we know that increasing the cost for local districts to send their students to us is a last resort that would likely result in reduced enrollment.

We appreciate that the Legislature is committed to finding solutions to the funding problems. We know that it is not easy given the state's current fiscal situation and we applaud the effort you are making to engage stakeholders and to consider a variety of solutions.

On behalf of the students and staff of the Camden County Technical School District, I ask you to keep in mind the important role of career and technical education, and the special funding challenges of county-based schools that do not control their local tax levy. As a relatively lower wealth county with a very large percentage of economically disadvantaged students, Camden County Tech would be devastated by the Governor's non-equalized funding proposal, which does not recognize the high cost of vocational programs or the intensive educational needs of our students.

Rather, we urge the Legislature to move towards restoration of enrollment based funding under the SFRA, which will help us keep pace with rising costs and emerging workforce needs in Camden County. In doing so, I ask you to avoid any aid reductions for county vocational schools, which lack the ability to replace lost aid with local tax levy aid. We do not want well-intentioned funding reallocations to end up increasing costs for local districts and possibly limiting opportunities for students to attend county vocational schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and for your continued support of New Jersey's county vocational-technical schools.

**Testimony of Greg Cappello, Principal
Camden County Technical School District
Before The
Assembly Education Committee
Tuesday, February 7, 2017**

Good Afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to share the impact that a loss in school funding has had in my district. My name is Greg Cappello. I am the Principal of Pennsauken Campus here at Camden County Technical Schools. As my colleagues have indicated, we are thrilled to have you with us this afternoon. We are happy to see the Legislature take a hard look at this tough issue.

Camden Tech and the other county vocational-technical school districts have a unique mission, which is to integrate career-focused technical training with academic instruction and extracurricular experiences so that students will be prepared for careers as well as college.

The Camden County Technical Schools provide a broad range of career programs, including STEM, health careers, homeland security, building trades, automotive technology and performing arts. Our ability to keep pace with industry demands, support economic growth, and prepare our students for the jobs of tomorrow is dependent on sufficient resources for our academic and career programs.

As a county vocational school, we are funded differently. About 55 percent of our funding comes from the State, 25 percent from the County, 14 percent from local districts and a small amount from federal and other sources.

Like other districts, Camden Tech has struggled with stagnant funding for the past seven years. Not only has our state funding remained relatively flat, but so has the portion of our funding provided by the County. **What makes our situation unique, however, is that unlike local districts, we do not have the ability to increase our tax levy each year.** We charge local districts a relatively modest tuition as their local share, and we know that increasing the cost for local districts to send their students to us is a last resort that would likely result in reduced enrollment.

In response our mantra has been 'do more with less.' We recognize we must support our students. Over 65 percent of our kids come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Many are several grade levels behind in their academic subjects when entering our district. This makes intensive learning supports critical. What does that mean in actual practice - after school tutoring, 21st Century Extended Learning, Accuplacer tutoring, SAT tutoring, double periods for literacy, and other support programs.

By all accounts we are succeeding – as 95 percent of our students are successful. Moreover, these students not only meet all of the academic requirements for graduation, they also develop technical skills, obtain industry certifications, and gain work experience. Many earn college credits as part of their career program, and about 80 percent of our students go on to a two- or four-year college after graduating. **But, it is increasingly more difficult to provide the experiences and opportunities are students deserve. Quite simply we are struggling.**

A prime example is related to facilities. We struggle to address flooding and roof issues, as well as space limitations and even necessary security upgrades. **Our facility needs are critical.**

It is why we deeply appreciate the Legislature's commitment to finding solutions to the current funding crisis. We know that it is not easy given the state's current fiscal situation and we applaud the effort you are making to engage stakeholders and to consider a variety of solutions.

We urge you to start any discussion and deliberation with the current funding formula. As a relatively lower wealth county with a very large percentage of economically disadvantaged students, the **current funding formula recognizes the needs of my students more acutely and funds them appropriately.** We urge you to use this as the baseline for any changes considered – restoration of funding under the **funding formula will help us keep pace with rising costs and emerging workforce needs in Camden County.**

I also ask you to keep in mind the important role that career and technical education has in our communities. And, I would urge you to recognize the unique funding challenges of county-based schools that do not control their local tax levy.

While we've become accustomed to flat budgets – every flat budget is a step in the wrong direction for our students and schools. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and for your continued support of the students of New Jersey.

Egg Harbor Township Schools

Board of Education
13 Swift Drive
Egg Harbor Twp., NJ 08234
(609) 646-8441 x1001
www.eht.k12.nj.us

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW JERSEY ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Honorable Marlene Caride - Chair

February 7, 2017

Presented by the Egg Harbor Township School District

Peter E. Castellano, Esq.
Member, Egg Harbor Township Board of Education

Justin A. Riggs
Member, Egg Harbor Township Board of Education

Fredrick P. Nickles
Interim Superintendent, Egg Harbor Township Schools

Chandra D. Anaya, CPA
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Summary

On behalf of Egg Harbor Township, we would like to bring to your attention our desperate situation with regard to state school funding, and to explain the unique circumstances that Egg Harbor Township has faced, and continues to face, with each passing year that our School District is not adequately funded by the State of New Jersey. The topics we would like to address are: 1) A decade of rapid student population growth, mandated by the State Pinelands Commission, without corresponding state school aid increases, and EDA Assessments, 2) The effects of Atlantic City casino closures and a regional recession, and 3) How our kids are not getting what they need.

Mandated Growth and Flat State Aid

As a school district located in a Pinelands Regional Growth Area, the State of New Jersey has mandated the population growth of our township, which caused our school district to grow, but did not provide us with sufficient funds to educate the students that came to our district as a result of that mandate. At the same time, caps placed on budget and aid growth, coupled with years of flat state aid, simply did not allow us to keep pace with this growth. As a result, the continuing burden on the students and property tax payers of Egg Harbor Township is particularly onerous.

Between 2000 and 2007, our district grew by 2,008 students, for a 7-year growth rate of 34.7%. During that period our **rate of growth was the highest in the state.** Our enrollment topped out at nearly 8,000 students, and is now approximately 7,500 – back in 2000, our enrollment was 5,791. During all this growth, our increases were capped and did not keep up with this growth. Our budgets have never been able to catch up with this growth.

According to the Department of Labor, over the 5-year period from 2000 to 2004, Egg Harbor Township had 2,976 single-family housing starts – that's the **highest number of any municipality in the state.** During that same period of time, our population grew by approximately 10,000, from 30,000 to 40,000. Residential growth has since slowed due to the economy, but we are still mandated to accommodate 22,000 additional residential units.

Under the current law that provides State Education Aid, the State Department of Education imposes a two-tiered cap on the growth of state aid given to a district over the prior year's state aid. This cap applies regardless

chose to use the then Schools Construction Corporation (SCC) to build new schools. To date, this assessment has cost us nearly \$ 3 million.

2010-2011: \$400,347

2011-2012: \$319,537

2012-2013: \$472,583

2013-2014: \$543,131

2014-2015: \$543,131

2015-2016: \$543,131

2016-2017: \$543,131

Total = \$2,821,880

Effects of Atlantic City Casino Closures and Regional Recession

Egg Harbor Township paid a price for the economic boom of the local economy in the early to mid-2000s. However, Egg Harbor Township is now bearing the brunt of a persistent regional recession. Recent casino closures have severely impacted Egg Harbor Township residents. Atlantic County currently has the highest foreclosure rate in the nation, at 3.3 % and an unemployment rate of 7.1 %. Egg Harbor Township currently has 951 properties in some phase of foreclosure.

Egg Harbor Township suffers whether AC does well or does poorly. During boom times – the Pinelands Commission forces us to add residential housing without corresponding state aid. During bad times - people can't afford to pay their skyrocketing property taxes, and homes face foreclosure.

Effects on Education in Egg Harbor Township

With the increase in population described above, the Board and administration did its best to keep costs to a minimum and put resources to the classroom. But as a direct result of inadequate state aid, coupled with the EDA assessment, we have had to cut all middle school athletic and co-curricular programs, middle and high school summer school, bus runs, environmental programs, elementary and middle school gifted and talented, middle school afterschool remediation, grades 1-5 direct foreign language programming and instrumental music, middle school honors math and science, middle school math and reading specialists, and a number of high school clubs. Class sizes continue to grow. We are down approximately

100 staff since 2010, and we have been unable to address adding badly needed full-day kindergarten, and universal pre-K programs. The coming year's budget looks to be disastrous for our township.

Free and Reduced lunch Population and Special Education Costs

The Egg Harbor Township School District has gone from 27% free and reduced lunch to approximately 47% in the last 10 years due to the diminishing economy and demographic changes. Each year the district has had to reduce staffing in general education settings to meet the growing special education population and at-risk needs of our students. The cost for required paraprofessionals, mandated special education teachers to meet compliance, and a large increase in the autistic population has hi-jacked the majority of the budget with no clear end in sight as the community continues to struggle with job loss, foreclosures, mandated affordable housing, and the social challenges that come with those paradigm shifts.

What we need right now:

Fully fund the formula With the imposition of a 2 % property tax cap, our only hope to be able to educate our children is through **ADEQUATE STATE AID**. Funding must be on a per pupil basis, based on actual student counts.

Reform the school budget process The Governor issues state aid amounts in late February, and districts must submit their final budgets in early March. For as long as anyone can remember, those numbers have not been in accordance with the funding formula, which is required by the State Constitution. By the time the legislature passes a budget in July, school budgets are set. The legislature needs to have a say in the process before state aid and school budgets are finalized.

**Testimony Before the NJ Assembly
School Funding Committee
Camden County Technical Institute
Sicklerville, NJ
Tuesday, February 7, 2017**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen of the committee. My name is Kathryn Judge, a BOE member from Cherry Hill, the 12th largest school district in NJ, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be here today to shed light on the lack of funding and would like to address this complex subject in the context of my own district's experiences. I also sit on the Garden State Coalition of Schools Executive Board. I am certain you will hear many stories from GSCS districts with your tour of the state on this topic.

In Cherry Hill, we were forced with some very difficult decisions when the Governor confiscated \$3.2 million dollars from our fund balance in 2010 and slashed our budget (we were penalized for being frugal). Today, we do not receive what we received in 2009, even though many other school districts have been brought back to at least the 2009 budget levels.

For the last decade, we have focused our energies on maintaining low class size and instruction of the children of our district. This has concentrated our resources in the classroom, but has also restricted important programs in the district.

We cut spending on Professional Development and reduced stipends in each sport and club, which saved the district almost \$300,000. However, at the middle school level, sports are now restricted to approximately 20 kids per sport. There is no money. Previously, any child could participate.

The average age of our 19 buildings is 50 years old and working space is limited. Our current budget severely restricts maintenance efforts. We would need a multimillion dollar referendum just for black top.

We have no plans for a 1:1 technology initiative in Cherry Hill, to the surprise of our Executive County Superintendent. In fact, we use technology much longer than the expected life of 3-4 years with some of our technology extending beyond 7 years. We don't have the money.

In some of the AP classes at both East and West High School, there are 41 children sitting in the classroom. Our classrooms were not built to hold 41 desks. Some of the children sit on the floor and hope someone is absent so they can have their desk that day.

We do not offer full day kindergarten. We don't have the money for staffing and we don't have the space. If there is a mandate that we must offer full day kindergarten, it will not be in the traditional sense of home elementary schools because, again, we don't have the space. At one time, our District Factor Group was IJ. As of the last time District Factor Groups were analyzed, we are now GH. Even that designation no longer accurately reflects our District.

Of our 19 schools, a third are Title I schools. In those six building, one in three children are eligible for free and reduced lunch (33%)! 81% of Cherry Hill's school budget is from our local tax payers. Just think about that a minute. 81%!

In closing, clearly, Cherry Hill is no longer the 'wealthy' or "affluent" school district it once was and that the local media continues to refer to Cherry Hill as. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak in front of you today. I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Kathryn Bay Judge, Cherry Hill School District

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Budgetary Cost Per Pupil: Out of 103 like districts throughout the state Deptford is ranked 19 with a low Budgetary Cost Per Pupil at \$13,434 with the highest being Pleasantville City-Atlantic County \$20,904 and next highest in Bergen County

*Taxpayer guide to spending Indicator 1

Operations and Plant Maintenance: Out of 103 like districts Deptford ranks 41 lowest (\$1,558) with highest being Union City- Hudson County (\$3,376).

*Taxpayer guide to spending Indicator 10

- Due to budgetary constraints the district has been forced to cut our plant ops and maintenance general fund budget over \$500,000 in the last three years. All capital improvement projects have been put on hold due to lack of funding, the district had no additional excess surplus to put into Capital Reserve at the end of 15-16 to continue future capital improvements.
- Reduction of custodial staff through attrition due to budget constraints and contract obligations the district can't sustain.
- 2 failed Bond Referendums for necessary improvements to roofs, HVAC, security upgrades
- The district does not currently have air conditioning in any school building except one, we are required to provide air to students with doctors notes who have health needs, 110 units installed in two year period. Not efficient.

Funding:

- District growth has not been maintained in the current formula, as in a three year average is in place rather than actual enrollment for that year so the growth rate calculation is not accurate. Example: 10/15/15 resident enrollment was 4190.5 10/15/16 resident enrollment is 4225.5 difference of 36 students. Based on these averages we would be funded at 4202 instead of the 4226.5 this also affects how the weighted enrollment is calculated also. In addition the number of low income students is decreased from the SFRA calculation to the actual state aid we receive.
- Based on information received from the state regarding School Aid, Deptford Township BOE vs. SFRA true funding the district has been shorted \$22.5 million in the last 5 years. While our enrollment has not significantly increased as it has in other districts the number of low income families has, these families require more services the district provides.
- Half day pre-school students are counted as half for Pre-K funding so the district is being penalized for providing an am/pm session in that we only get funding for half those students even though our staff is full time.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- In the last three years the district has subsidized the pre-k program in Deptford with more than \$1.3 million dollars from the general fund. If we service 232 students we should be funded on 232 not 116.- If the "fairness formula" students would be funded at \$6,599 where currently we are receiving \$10,682 based on the adequacy calculation.- Deptford Township schools is looking at a \$1.384 million deficit going into the 2017-18 school year prior to any salary, healthcare or utility increases as revenues are not consistent with growing health care costs, salary increases, Special Education costs. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The district is competing with other schools in the area to provide "academies" and STEM programs to keep our students here and challenge them, we are unable to proceed with any new academies due to lack of funding. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Our technology infrastructure is lacking in comparison to other districts and we are not able to afford our students with the opportunities that similar sized districts are providing because we can't afford it. |

Current enrollment:

ASSA 10/15/16 - 4226.5

On-roll current: 4399

Free and Reduced: 40% (ASSA figures)

Per Pupil Cost Calculations	2013-14 Actual Costs	2014-15 Actual Costs	2015-16 Original Budget	2015-16 Revised Budget	2016-17 Proposed Budget
Total Budgetary Comparative Per Pupil Cost	\$12,074	\$12,538	\$13,343	\$13,403	\$14,499
Total Classroom Instruction	\$7,387	\$7,560	\$8,041	\$7,983	\$8,756
Classroom-Salaries and Benefits	\$6,931	\$6,991	\$7,509	\$7,409	\$8,316
Classroom-General Supplies and Textbooks	\$223	\$337	\$287	\$326	\$209
Classroom-Purchased Services	\$232	\$232	\$244	\$247	\$230
Total Support Services	\$1,645	\$1,730	\$1,969	\$1,968	\$2,199
Support Services-Salaries and Benefits	\$1,533	\$1,605	\$1,742	\$1,730	\$1,914
Total Administrative Costs	\$1,294	\$1,410	\$1,443	\$1,568	\$1,568
Administration Salaries and Benefits	\$1,096	\$1,113	\$1,160	\$1,218	\$1,219
Total Operations and Maintenance of Plant	\$1,479	\$1,541	\$1,558	\$1,550	\$1,609
Operations and Maintenance-Salaries and Benefits	\$976	\$1,013	\$1,009	\$1,001	\$1,090
Board Contribution to Food Services	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Extracurricular Costs	\$149	\$178	\$200	\$200	\$219
Total Equipment Costs	\$48	\$190	\$44	\$56	\$0
Legal Costs	\$31	\$38	\$28	\$42	\$39
Employee Benefits as a percentage of salaries*	26.63%	25.39%	27.40%	25.88%	29.85%

**Testimony before the New Jersey Senate Select Committee on School Funding Fairness
Camden County Technical, February 7, 2017**

By Chris Benedetto, Chair, Cherry Hill Parents for Fair Funding

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Select Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Chris Benedetto, and I am the chair of the Cherry Hill Parents for Fair Funding committee. My purpose for testifying here today is to ask for the full SFRA amount that is owed to Cherry Hill.

Now to ensure you understand the historical milestones and gravity of this situation as it applies to Cherry Hill, let's play a little game called fact or fiction and see if you can spot which statements are true and which are not.

- The SFRA legislated amount for Cherry Hill is \$27.9M or about \$2500 per student. **FACT Yes, this is what was originally established.**
- Since 2008, Cherry Hill has received between \$11.4 million and \$12.9 million from the state annually, or about \$1200 per student. **FACT This is below the SFRA legislated amount AND below the capped amount of \$16.5M.**
- Compounded over the last 8 years, Cherry Hill has missed out on almost \$90M in funding and also lost \$5M in surplus which was seized by the Governor in 2010. **FACT The value of this lost money in today's dollars is incalculable, but I know other districts have gotten this money including some of the districts represented here tonight.**
- Cherry Hill receives less funding per student than similar district factor group schools in central, northern, and neighboring districts. **FACT You heard that right. Similar districts somehow have more money and have seen their SFRA allocations go up, but not Cherry Hill.**
- Student graduation rates and standardized test scores have improved or been maintained. **FACT, despite budget increases for free lunches, special ed students, and other infrastructure costs.**
- Cherry Hill students get iPads, have new HS textbooks in World Language and History, enjoy smoothly paved parking lots, and have their activity fees – like robotics club – paid for by the district. **FALSE That's actually Voorhees, Washington Township, East Windsor, Upper Freehold, and other Northern and Central districts.**

All irony and satire aside, my point is this: We, the parents, citizens and district employees of Cherry Hill Schools feel you have failed us. And no one is speaking this truth because we're afraid of losing what little we get. We know the system is insolvent, but we also know that there are districts that should not be getting as much as they do now.

So here's my report card on SFRA, the three competing bills, and these hearings:

- **Days Absent** – It's been 3800 days since SFRA was enacted and 3800 days since the DFGs have been redone to account for economic, social, and demographic changes. Without this data, we're frozen in time and getting what the State thinks we needed in 2008. **An F.**
- **Cooperates with peers** – The three competing solutions are all flawed and the three sponsors, governor, assembly, and senate, refuse to talk to each other constructively. I also notice that the NJEA and PTA, key constituencies, are not represented as stakeholders in some of these bills. **An F.**
- **Shows Effort** – These meetings definitely show effort. But effort doesn't lower my tax bill or give my kids the educational funds that other kids in the state are getting. I see no clear path as to how the money I've sent to Trenton will result in dollars for my kids before they age out of the school district. **A C+.**

In conclusion, the 700+ members and constituents of the Fair Funding group seek an SFRA - or alternative – solution that is transparent, accurately reflective of a district's student makeup, consistently applied across all districts, and that takes into account the financial hardships that have been imposed on Cherry Hill for the last 8 years. The time is now to act and fully fund SFRA as designed, or to scrap the model and start over. We literally can't wait any longer. Thank you again for allowing us to testify.

Dec 15, 2016

Mayor Chuck Cahn
820 Mercer Street Suite 105
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

Dear Mayor Cahn,

I am writing with concerns about Cherry Hill Public School state funding. Cherry Hill School District has been shortchanged since 2008. I urge you to act so that the district receives its fair share.

According to the State's own SFRA formula, Cherry Hill was allocated \$16.5 million annually since 2008. Cherry Hill has never received its fully allotted amount having received an average of \$12.2 million per year. The yearly underfunding has resulted in a cumulative \$62 million loss to Cherry Hill.

As a result of the underfunding, we have deteriorating buildings, outdated technology, loss of key educational staff, poor playing fields, and broken playground equipment. Fair State funding could provide building upgrades, more technology, additional staffing, supplementary sports and playground equipment, parking lot improvements, and more.

Cherry Hill residents, children, teachers, and administrators deserve better resources.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter. I look forward to hearing what you plan to do to get Cherry Hill its fair share of SFRA funding.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Pryz
Name
Cherry Hill Resident

Shensha Lefebvre

Jack

Christopher B. Dolan

Lisa Zaretsky

Dec 15, 2016

The Honorable Lou Greenwald
1101 Laurel Oak Road Suite 150
Voorhees, NJ 08043-4322

Dear Assemblyman Greenwald,

I am writing with concerns about Cherry Hill Public School state funding. Cherry Hill School District has been shortchanged since 2008. I urge you to act so that the district receives its fair share.

According to the State's own SFRA formula, Cherry Hill was allocated \$16.5 million annually since 2008. Cherry Hill has never received its fully allotted amount having received an average of \$12.2 million per year. The yearly underfunding has resulted in a cumulative \$62 million loss to Cherry Hill.

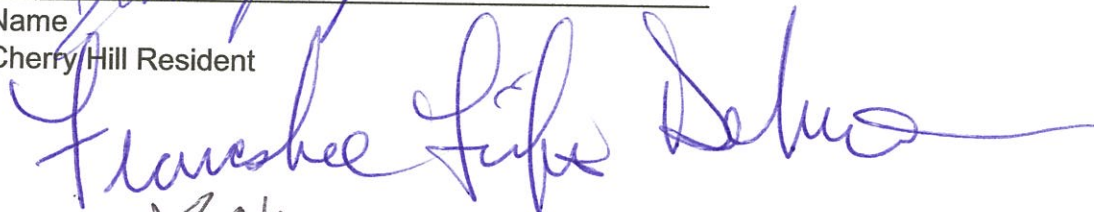
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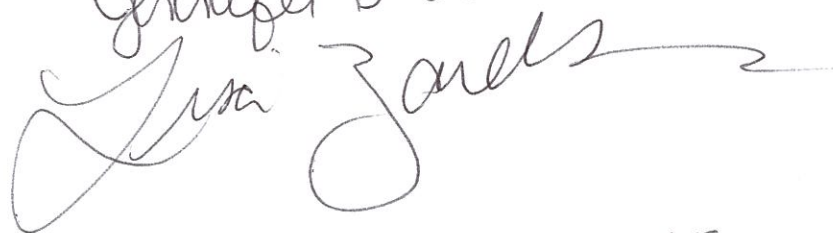
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Respectfully submitted,


Name _____
Cherry Hill Resident




Jennifer B. Dorn



Dec 15, 2016

The Honorable Pamela Lampitt
1101 Laurel Oak Road Suite 150
Voorhees, NJ 08043-4322

Dear Assemblywoman Lampitt,

I am writing with concerns about Cherry Hill Public School state funding. Cherry Hill School District has been shortchanged since 2008. I urge you to act so that the district receives its fair share.

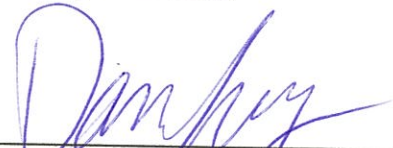
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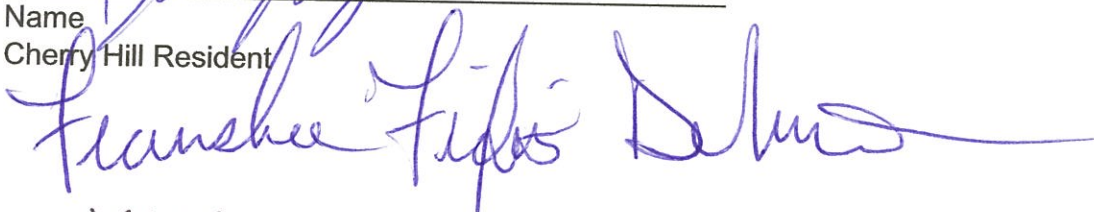
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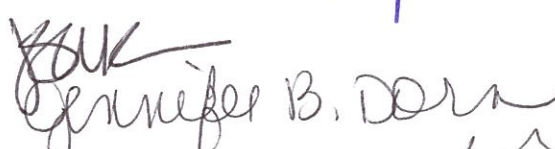
Thank you for your consideration on this matter. I look forward to hearing what you plan to do to get Cherry Hill its fair share of SFRA funding.

Respectfully submitted,



Name
Cherry Hill Resident







Dec 15, 2016

The Honorable James Beach
1309 Route 70 West
Cherry Hill NJ 08002-3738

Dear Senator Beach,

I am writing with concerns about Cherry Hill Public School state funding. Cherry Hill School District has been shortchanged since 2008. I urge you to act so that the district receives its fair share.

According to the State's own SFRA formula, Cherry Hill was allocated \$16.5 million annually since 2008. Cherry Hill has never received its fully allotted amount having received an average of \$12.2 million per year. The yearly underfunding has resulted in a cumulative \$62 million loss to Cherry Hill.

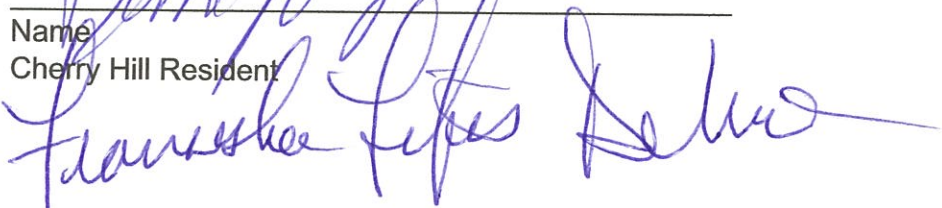
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Cherry Hill residents, children, teachers, and administrators deserve better resources.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter. I look forward to hearing what you plan to do to get Cherry Hill its fair share of SFRA funding.

Respectfully submitted,


Name _____
Cherry Hill Resident




Jennifer B. Doer



Dec 15, 2016

The Honorable Steve Sweeney
935 Kings Highway Suite 400
West Deptford, NJ 08086

Dear Senator Sweeney,

I am writing with concerns about Cherry Hill Public School state funding. Cherry Hill School District has been shortchanged since 2008. I urge you to act so that the district receives its fair share.

According to the State's own SFRA formula, Cherry Hill was allocated \$16.5 million annually since 2008. Cherry Hill has never received its fully allotted amount having received an average of \$12.2 million per year. The yearly underfunding has resulted in a cumulative \$62 million loss to Cherry Hill.

As a result of the underfunding, we have deteriorating buildings, outdated technology, loss of key educational staff, poor playing fields, and broken playground equipment. Fair State funding could provide building upgrades, more technology, additional staffing, supplementary sports and playground equipment, parking lot improvements, and more.


Cherry Hill residents, children, teachers, and administrators deserve better resources.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter. I look forward to hearing what you plan to do to get Cherry Hill its fair share of SFRA funding.

Respectfully submitted,


Name _____
Cherry Hill Resident




Jennifer B. Dolan



Dear Christie, Beach Sampath, Mayor John
Fweeney ^{etc,}

I am writing about Cherry Hill Public School state funding.

I want action to be taken for the district to receive its fair share. Cherry Hill has been short changed by \$16 million (unpaid capped state funding) to \$62 million (unpaid SFRA formula funding) in the past four years alone.

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What are you doing to get Cherry Hill its fair share of state education funding?

Sincerely,

Mouy Bisulca

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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What are you doing to get Cherry Hill its fair share of state education funding?

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Kevin Hamzehl

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Marie Di Martini

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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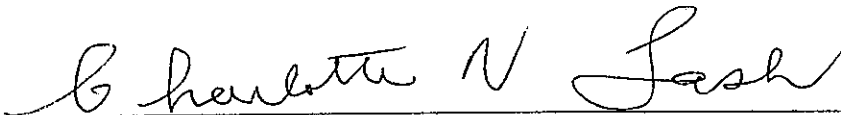
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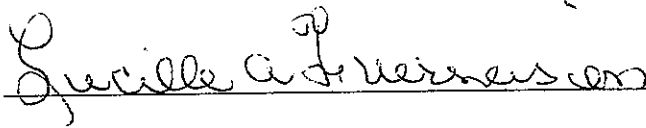
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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lucille A. Verneisen". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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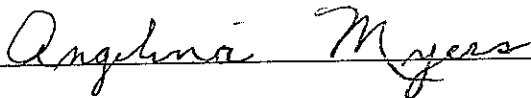
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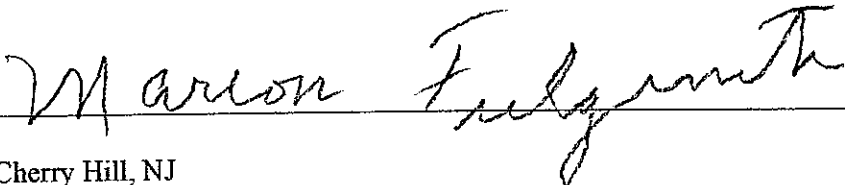
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What are you doing to get Cherry Hill its fair share of state education funding?

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Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear 11-14-2016

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What are you doing to get Cherry Hill its fair share of state education funding?

Sincerely,

Mary A. Miller
Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear Christee, Beach, Lampitt, Greenwood
Mayor Cohn

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Adele Mohrfeld

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Walter Wedgelyewah

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Sincerely,

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Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear LOUIS GREENWALD

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What are you doing to get Cherry Hill its fair share of state education funding?

Sincerely,

Marilyn Greenberg (MARILYN GREENBERG)
Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear Legislator,

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What are you doing to get Cherry Hill its fair share of state education funding?

Sincerely,

Pearl Plumer

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ - since 1958
and taxpayer

Dear Mr Greenwald

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Bryna Haler

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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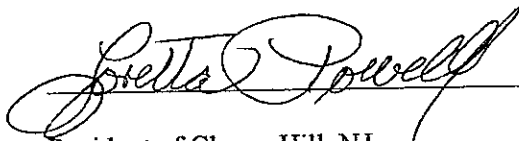
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What are you doing to get Cherry Hill its fair share of state education funding?

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Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear Jim Beach, Sweeney, Christie, Greenwood
Lampitt

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Norwood D. Regetz

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Sincerely,

for
Shirley Cohen H. Regels
Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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What are you doing to get Cherry Hill its fair share of state education funding?

Sincerely,

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Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear Fannie Tess

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ELAINE PROCIDA

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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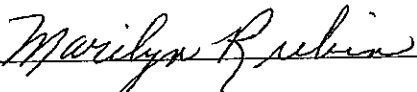
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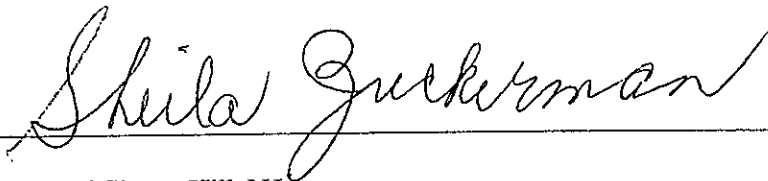
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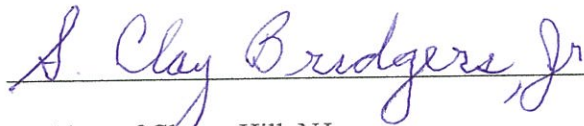
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Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear Patricia Greenwald

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Anthony C. Bilotta

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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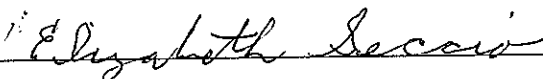
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Kathleen K. Ward

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear Senator Sam Beach

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I want action to be taken for the district to receive its fair share. Cherry Hill has been short changed by \$16 million (unpaid capped state funding) to \$62 million (unpaid SFRA formula funding) in the past four years alone.

As a result of the underfunding, we have deteriorating buildings, outdated technology, loss of key educational staff, poor playing fields and broken playground equipment.

Fair state funding could provide building upgrades, more technology, additional staffing, supplementary sports and playground equipment, parking lot improvements and more.

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What are you doing to get Cherry Hill its fair share of state education funding?

Sincerely,



Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Alex Dutoit

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear Representative Louis Greenwald

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Sincerely,

Ally Dietrich

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear Representative Pamela Lampitt

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Ally Pink

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Ally Deitch

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Molly Vass

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear Mr. Sweeney

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Sincerely,

Bridget Horgan Bell

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear Ms Lampitt,

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Sincerely,

Bridget Morgan Bell

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Bridget Horan Bell

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Dear

Jim Beach

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Imasey Kih

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Bridget Hergen Bell

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Elizabeth H. Sobus

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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Jamie H. Denton

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

(H)x

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James H. Deitel

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

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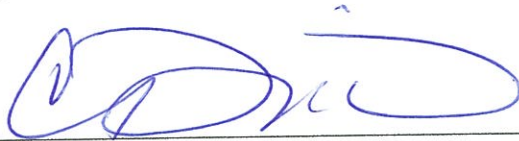
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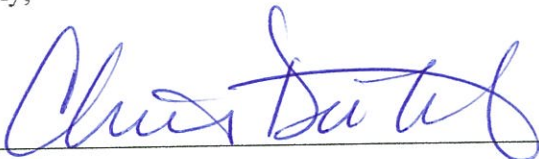
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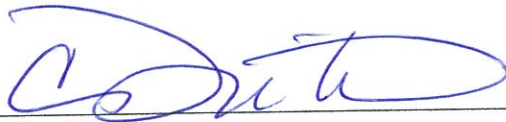
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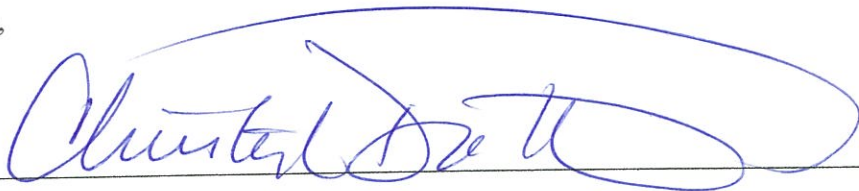
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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Christopher DeLuca", written over a horizontal line.

Resident of Cherry Hill, NJ

Testimony of Patricia L. Haney, Superintendent
Logan Township School District
Gloucester County
February 7, 2017

Good evening, ~~Mr.~~ Chair and members of the Assembly Education Committee. I am Patricia Haney, Superintendent of the Logan Township School District, located in Gloucester County. I am here to provide testimony regarding the SFRA of 2008. I wish to speak to the data found on the *Formula4Success* website, which states that "when it comes to public schools in New Jersey" fixing the state funding formula is "simple". There is nothing simple about the present situation that all school districts find themselves today. The entire state funding of schools is NOT simple!

After attending the Senate Committee held at Kingsway Regional High School on Jan. 27th, I quickly realized that the committee was not focused on reforming school funding. Rather, the committee's focus is on comparing districts. I ask you to be careful about comparing districts. One cannot assume all "over adequacy" districts are the same because some may be over adequacy because the district raised additional funds through its tax levy. Taking funds away from such districts, would penalize those towns whose taxpayers showed support for their local schools over the past 8+ years.

Let me share with you the complexity of how the Senate proposal would affect my district. As a PreK to 12 District, we include in our budget the costs of the tuition for and transportation of all of our high school resident students, because we don't have our own high school in Logan Township. Due to this situation, the proposed School Fairness Funding Act would most likely negatively impact Logan twice.

First, our district stands to have close to \$1 million taken away over the next five years because we have not been a "growing" district. That would mean that we would lose about \$190,000 each year, which equates to laying off approximately 3 teachers every year for the next five years. Second, we would have our high school tuition bill increased due to the fact that $\frac{2}{3}$ of our resident high school students attend, as tuition students, a regional high school, which is a growing district. Because they are listed as a growing district, this high school district stands to receive increased state funding as a result of the Fairness Funding Act which would then result in an increase in their per pupil cost because that sending district would be spending more money on their ^{receiving} ~~sending~~ students. Since our tuition bill is calculated based on that per pupil cost, our ~~sending~~ ^{receiving}

high school district would then, in turn, increase our tuition bill for each high school student we send to them.

We currently send approximately 270 students to that high school district. If our tuition bill were to increase by \$1,000 per student, our budget would have to absorb an increase of \$270,000 which would mean 4 additional teachers would have to be terminated each year which would decimate our teaching staff. We are asking that you consider this as you gather your facts and reflect on possible solutions.

Some of our suggestions would be:

- Lift the cap on enrollment growth aid by including additional state aid;
- Cap the annual tuition increase billed by receiving districts to sending districts, similar to the 2% cap on tax levy we presently have to adhere to, or
- allow districts like Logan to have a cap adjustment for tuition increases over 2% or
- allow a tax cap adjustment to districts to the extent of the adjustment aid that would be lost.

Fixing the state funding situation will not be simple and must consider the impact on all districts. Proposing to take funds from some districts and move those funds to districts which have been underfunded is simply moving funds around and reversing hardship from one set of districts to another.

I urge this committee to include finance experts from school districts and the DOE to be part of the fact-finding process before any solution is finalized.

Logan is willing to provide more insight to a very complex problem at a time convenient for this committee. I also invite each member of this panel to visit our district to see a successful 21st century learning institution so you can experience first hand the types of programs which stand to be lost, and subsequent teacher layoffs which would follow, if the Senate Select Committee's plan takes effect.

Thank you for your attention to this complex problem and to my testimony this evening!

7/10/14

**Testimony Before the New Jersey Assembly Budget Committee
Tuesday, February 7, 2017**

Ronald C. Brady
Regional Director, Freedom Prep Charter School
1000 Atlantic Avenue, Camden, NJ 08104
Tel: 856-962-0766; Fax: 856-962-0769
rbrady@democracyprep.org

Good Evening. I am Ron Brady, the Regional Director of Freedom Prep Charter School in Camden and the Board of Trustees President of the New Jersey Charter Schools Association. For the past 20 years, I have worked in New Jersey public education, across both charter and district schools. Five of my seven children attend or have attended New Jersey charter schools.

Freedom Prep educates 810 scholars in grades K through 11. 18% of our scholars have disabilities, 14% are English Language Learners, 93% receive free or reduced priced lunch. We are, in all respects, a New Jersey urban public school, serving a wide spectrum of Camden children with all of their aspirations and their attendant challenges and needs.

As you consider changes to school funding, we believe that several key factors that should guide your deliberations:

1. **Charter School Students are Public School Students** – As I just shared, Freedom Prep’s student body is representative of the city of Camden in terms of income, special education status, English Language Learner status and aspirations and challenges. Yet today, Freedom Prep’s scholars receive approximately 70% of the per pupil allocation of their Camden school district peers, NOT the original 90% originally envisioned by the legislature when the law creating charter schools was passed in NJ.
2. **Charter Schools and District Schools Are Not Competing** – Charter and district schools serve the same students. Our families at Freedom Prep, when they transfer out 30% choose to attend a Camden City district school, 15% a Camden renaissance school and 8% a neighboring district school. Our Camden children all have high needs and regardless of school building—charter or district—as a matter of equity, we believe that all Camden children should carry with them funds consistent with their needs.
3. **Charter Schools are In Demand by Parents** – Across the State, more than 20,000 households are on wait lists to enroll in charter schools. These are families who are saying that they seek a charter public school alternative to their district-run public school. These alternatives that parents are demanding can only be met if funding is at the 90% originally envisioned by the legislature.

In the current New Jersey fiscal climate, Freedom Prep is, as we always have, makes the best with the resources we have. Were we to have more resources, how would we use them? We would use them in two key ways:

1. **Hire more teachers** – Our children have significant instructional needs. Since we are admitting students at every grade level, many arrive to our school with instructional deficits. Regardless of the source of these deficits, we are charged with preparing our scholars for college and lives of active citizenship. With more resources, we would hire more teachers to better address the instructional deficits of each child.
2. **Hire more student support personnel** – In addition to their instructional needs, our children would greatly benefit from an extensive social-emotional support network. We would expand these in our school so that we can better meet student needs.

In the absence of these funds, our staff is doing more with less. In a survey we conducted of our teachers earlier this school year, teachers estimated that they spent an average of 66½ hours/week in and out of school on classroom duties. Across or an average of over 13 hours/day across a five-day work week. Our teachers demonstrate an indefatigable level of dedication, professionalism and commitment to our scholars. We appreciate this dedication. At the same time, with more resources, we can both do more for our scholars AND for our staff, by hiring more adults to help implement this challenging and important work. Thus, rather than doing more with less, we would do more with more.

To conclude, we recognize and respect the current fiscal situation. We must also advocate for our scholars and for the increased funding for them, and all public-school students, so that we can better fulfill our mission and our children can better fulfill their promise. We ask that you support us in this.

**Testimony Before the New Jersey Assembly Education Committee regarding School Funding Fairness
Sicklerville, NJ
February 7, 2017**

By Steven Robbins, Representative, Cherry Hill Parents for Fair Funding

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Steve Robbins, and I am testifying on behalf of the Cherry Hill Parents for Fair Funding committee. My purpose for testifying here today is to inform you of the existence of our group, who we are, our goals, and what you can expect from us in the future.

The committee was formed in 2013 by a group of parents responding to school officials' call for citizen action. They reported that our state legislators were persuaded more by regular citizens rather than by the same school officials year after year. All the while these same legislators acknowledged the existence of Cherry Hill's state funding deficit, both in absolute terms under SFRA and comparatively with similar districts.

What started as a small group of parents culled from Cherry Hill school PTAs has now grown to include parent representatives from the bulk of Cherry Hill's 19 schools, plus school officials, school board members, district school union officials and other concerned Cherry Hill citizens. The committee's Facebook page has over 700 followers and is growing.

The purpose of the committee is to give voice to Cherry Hill parents and voters who are concerned about an unfair school funding system that is opaque, inconsistent and in some cases punitive; and about the continued lack of action to remedy this situation by both the legislative and executive branches.

The committee's goals are simple: to recover the millions of Cherry Hill taxpayer dollars confiscated by the state in 2010; to recover the tens of millions in funds Cherry Hill was entitled to but did not receive under SFRA since its enactment; and to seek a fair funding system that is transparent, accurately reflective of a district's actual student makeup and consistently applied across all districts.

The committee intends to accomplish these goals by using grassroots lobbying, public engagement and education, and the active support of candidates for public office that further the committee's goals.

Committee representatives have already met on more than one occasion with Cherry Hill's state and local elected officials, as well as representatives from the NJ Department of Education's budget office. These meetings were constructive and laid the foundation for further discussions to achieve a fair and equitable funding system.

In the days ahead, the committee intends to extend its outreach both within the district and with outside leaders to attain the goals of the committee. The committee is working on other means of engagement beyond the grassroots lobbying I've discussed here today. We intend to partner with similar grassroots organizations across the state. Together, we will engage in coordinated direct lobbying and direct support to candidates, regardless of party affiliation or incumbency, who will make the committee's goals a part of their platform and who have a genuine willingness to make it happen.

Thank you again for allowing us to testify.

February 7, 2017

Lindenwold Public School District, Camden County

In fiscal year 2009, the first and only year that the School Funding Reform Act formula was funded, the Lindenwold School District provided desperately needed tax relief to the residents of Lindenwold while presenting a budget that they believed to be fiscally responsible. Nine years later, we find ourselves unable to provide a thorough and efficient education for our children with a budget that is under adequacy and over the local fair share.

So what's changed in Lindenwold? Enrollment has significantly increased. As of the most recent state aid count, we have 2725 students PK-12 which represents a growth in enrollment of over 400 students. With 24 apartment complexes, high mobility is also a factor. The poverty level has increased significantly from 60% of our students receiving free or reduced meals to 80% today. Our English Language Learner population has skyrocketed. We reported 454 Limited English Proficient students on our most recent ASSA report compared to only 155 students in 2009. Yet, our State funding has not been adjusted fairly for these impactful changes in our demographics.

The formula was designed to adjust funding based on enrollment increases and decreases and provided for weighted calculations for at-risk factors, including poverty and Limited English Proficiency recognizing that at-risk students require additional services to be successful. The lack of action on the State's part to implement this legislation is detrimental to our district, as we have grown significantly in all three funding drivers with no adjustment in our aid. On average, the State funded approximately 85% of the SFRA formula last year statewide. While some districts in our area received upwards of 140% of what they would have been entitled to had the formula been applied, Lindenwold only received approximately 61% of what we would have been entitled to receive had the formula been applied to the actual distribution of funds. For Lindenwold, the difference between 85% of the formula aid and 61% of the formula aid uncapped equates to approximately \$9.5 million dollars in additional State aid. It is simply put, not fair. We understand that the State is unable to fully fund the formula at this time, so we are asking the State to apply the SFRA formula to the distribution of available funds equitably.

(TURN OVER)

SDX

As you know, the annual budget process caps the increase on taxes at 2% of the prior year tax levy. The only other mechanism to increase taxes is to use banked cap. Our board has utilized approximately \$1.3 million dollars of banked cap in the past two budget years to provide much needed services to students, placing the community currently over their "fair share". Ultimately, the full burden of the increased enrollment and change in demographics is being placed on the backs of our residents to support. Keep in mind that the 80% of our children who are currently receiving free or reduced meals naturally come from households in our community who are living below the poverty line. Our residents are absorbing tax increases at a higher ratio than their neighboring towns and we are providing inadequate services as prescribed by the NJDOE; this financial fallout is what we call social injustice. Our students deserve the same educational opportunities as other students in New Jersey. We are here to today to advocate for what is fair for our children and our community.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori L. Moore, Ed.D., Superintendent
Kathleen Huder, Business Administrator
Cathy Moncrief, Board President

Lindenwold Board of Education 2017-2018 Budget Discussion

Largest Cost Drivers and Concerns

- Enrollment increase of approximately 400 students since SFRA was funded in 2009
- Corresponding English Language Learners population growth - increase in Latino demographic from 28% to over 50% in past 5 years and corresponding increase in ESL students – approximately 300 more students since SFRA was funded in 2009
- Climbing Free/Reduced Lunch rates to excess of 80%
- Building capacity at maximum - we moved our preschool program into old Catholic School building in FY15 to free up space in elementary buildings -growth in past 2 years has now occupied this space and the preschool building has many limitations (not in compliance with ADA, bathrooms not in classrooms, have reached full capacity in building)
- Class sizes of 25-30 throughout the K-12 program with ESL elementary classes sometimes in excess of 30
- Uncontainable costs such as medical intensive services and charter school tuitions continue to be a concern – estimated costs for FY 18 is over \$750,000.

Selected Categories of Aid and Enrollment

Category	Net Increases since SFRA	2017-2018	Per pupil funds	2008-2009	Per pupil funds
Aid:					
State Aid	2,113,835	24,764,150	9,384	22,650,315	9,978
General Fund Tax Levy	1,941,946	13,232,162	5,014	11,290,216	4,974
Enrollment:					
Resident Student Count	369	2639		2270	
On Roll Student Count	453	2725		2272	
Low income on roll	795	2162		1367	
Charter	46	46		0	
LEP on roll	299	454		155	

State Aid per pupil difference from FY2009 (SFRA funded)	\$	(594.20)	-5.96%
Tax Levy per pupil difference from FY2009 (SFRA funded)	\$	40.42	0.81%

Note - Aid per pupil is calculated using the resident student count which accounts for Prek enrollment and send/receive relationships

82x

Lindenwold Board of Education 2017-2018 Budget Discussion

Projected Budget Increases 2017-2018

- Annual salary and benefit increases estimated at \$715,000 (net of Chapter 78 contributions) - this accounts for current positions only – no increase in services
- Charter school tuition cost increase of \$150,000 (this will account for current year increase in enrollment with no anticipated increase for FY18)

As a high needs district, the current positions do not come close to effectively addressing the needs of our diverse student population. Our program goals (which we are not able to meet) include addressing overall low student achievement by increasing basic skills intervention services in the areas of Mathematics and English Language Arts; providing desperately needed bilingual/ESL supports; and providing additional inclusion supports across the disciplines and grade levels for our special education students.

Projected Funding 2017-2018

- Tax Levy increase of 2% is equal to \$255,738. In addition, we have a healthcare adjustment of \$90,409 and banked cap of \$99,131 available for FY18 – for a total increase of \$445,278.
- Projecting Flat State Aid funding
- Chapter 78 Healthcare Contributions completely phased in as of FY17

SFRA Funding Inequities (Based on FY16 SFRA Formula Information Only)

- As of FY16 the Statewide average for actual funding versus SFRA calculated aid was at 85.3%.
- Lindenwold actual aid received is only 61.5% of the SFRA calculated aid.
- If all State Aid was reallocated to be equally distributed to all districts at the 85.3%, there would be no increase in the State's education fund dollars and we would all be funded equitably
- To Lindenwold, 85.3% would mean an increase of \$9.5 million.
- We realize this cannot happen in one year but we need incremental assistance at a minimum.

Lindenwold Board of Education 2017-2018 Budget Discussion

Analysis of State Aid and Correlating General Fund Tax Levy					
Year End	General Fund Tax Levy	Net State Aid	Total State Aid plus Tax	% of Tax Levy	% of State Aid
2018 (projected)	13,232,162	24,440,420	37,672,582	35.12%	65.74%
2017	12,786,884	24,440,420	37,227,304	34.35%	66.52%
2016	11,702,827	24,222,576	35,925,403	32.58%	68.33%
2015	10,983,164	24,222,576	35,205,740	31.20%	69.72%
2014	10,522,710	24,173,976	34,696,686	30.33%	70.31%
2013	10,316,381	23,679,890	33,996,271	30.35%	69.99%
2012	10,537,989	22,828,256	33,366,245	31.58%	68.60%
2011	11,010,144	22,123,947	33,134,091	33.23%	66.77%
2010	10,721,531	23,363,505	34,085,036	31.46%	68.54%
2009	11,290,216	22,650,315	33,940,531	33.26%	66.74%
2008	13,050,125	16,706,656	29,756,781	43.86%	56.14%
	SFRA funded - 20% cap				
	Local tax levy reduced to provide tax relief				

When SFRA was funded in FY2009, the Board provided tax relief of over \$2.3 million over FY2009 and 2010. As the State did not continue to fund the formula, this relief was short lived and taxes have been increased to an anticipated \$13,232,162 for FY2018.

The only way to increase a budget over the 2% tax levy increase is to utilize what is called Banked Cap. Banked Cap is derived from several different one-time adjustments generated in a budget year and is available to use for a rolling 3 year period. The cap adjustments that Lindenwold has been able to generate and use are for enrollment and healthcare increases. The Board has utilized \$1.3 million in the past 2 budget years. However, this leaves us with only \$99,000 of banked cap to rely on for FY2018.

Lindenwold Board of Education 2017-2018 Budget Discussion

2% of our tax levy cap increase is calculated as noted below:

Analysis 2% Tax Levy Cap					
Year End	General Fund Tax Levy	Net State Aid	Total State Aid plus Tax	2% of Tax Levy	% of Budget
2018 (projected)	13,232,162	24,440,420	37,672,582	255,738	0.679%
2017	12,786,884	24,440,420	37,227,304	234,057	0.629%
2016	11,702,827	24,222,576	35,925,403	219,663	0.611%
2015	10,983,164	24,222,576	35,205,740	210,454	0.598%
2014	10,522,710	24,173,976	34,696,686	206,328	0.595%
2013	10,316,381	23,679,890	33,996,271	210,760	0.620%
2012	10,537,989	22,828,256	33,366,245	220,203	0.660%
2011	11,010,144	22,123,947	33,134,091	214,431	0.647%
2010	10,721,531	23,363,505	34,085,036	225,804	0.662%
2009	11,290,216	22,650,315	33,940,531	261,003	0.769%
2008	13,050,125	16,706,656	29,756,781	271,754	0.913%
Actual percentage budget increase achieved with 2% tax levy cap					

Ultimately, districts that are heavily dependent on State Aid are held below a 2% total budget increase and specifically in Lindenwold, we are limited to an approximate \$250,000 annual increase to cover salary and healthcare benefit increases and all other normal course of business expenses. This is simply, not possible without eliminating even more services.

In summary, our suggestions for the committee today are to consider:

- First and foremost, funding the formula as designed equally across all districts
- Allowing a district to increase taxes based on 2% of the budget total and not the tax levy total

We believe our students deserve the same level of services as every student in the State of New Jersey and currently we are in a financial position that this is not obtainable.

Thank you for your time and understanding on these important issues.



KINGSWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Committed to Excellence

*Dr. James J. Lavender, ext. 4205
Superintendent of Schools*

*Ms. Patricia Calandro, ext. 4250
Chief Academic Officer*

Testimony provided by Patricia A. Calandro, Chief Academic Officer for the Kingsway Regional School District on Tuesday, February 7, 2017 before the Assembly Education Committee

Good evening:

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to speak today. My name is Patricia Calandro, and I currently serve as the Chief Academic Officer for the Kingsway Regional School District. In this role, I am the chief administrator in charge of school curriculum and programs for all students in grades 7 through 12. Prior to this role, I served as a special education teacher for nine years and I am entering into my sixth year as a school administrator at Kingsway.

Alongside my colleagues, I experience first-hand how the state's refusal to appropriately and fairly fund our district continues to fail our students and our community. Despite years of creative budgeting, hard work, and simply doing more with less, I sit here today saddened by the fact that we are officially broken. Today, I need to hire approximately twenty-five teachers across the district to operate programs appropriately, but funding shortfalls prevent me from doing so. Even more, I am disappointed that it comes as a result of the state's failure to understand the devastating impact unfair funding practices have on the very students we have been charged with developing and protecting.

This past year we faced a shortage of special education teachers. As a result, we had to submit three different applications for waivers to the county regarding class size restrictions for special education students placed in their least restrictive environment – a requirement under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The maximum group size for in-class resource programs has been set by the state of New Jersey as 10 (N.J.A.C. 6A:14). Although the waivers were approved, this is in no way ideal. We are overloading inclusive classes to ensure special education students have access to the specialized instruction they require in their least restrictive setting. IDEA states, "Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom, to the maximum extent possible." Simply stated, we do not have the special education teacher resources to adhere to the legal limits set under IDEA. Our ESL population continues to grow; in five years it has more than doubled. Yet, the state's continuing issuance of flat funding to districts like Kingsway display a neglect for two of the subgroups in need of significant academic supports.

As public educators, we are responsible for providing comprehensive educational programs for all children so that we can cultivate successful, informed citizens that can compete globally. Kingsway is not only faced with having to cut programs but also stifled in its ability to produce college and career tracks that we know our students require to grow intellectually and interpersonally.

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At a time when we are charged with effectively preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist, we are unable to offer a range of technology classes or provide our students with the technology they need to be successful in a competitive environment. Our inability to upgrade our wireless network infrastructure makes the infusion of educational technology into the classroom unreliable and thus ineffective. Our high school students consistently express a desire to take Advanced Placement courses or career-centered electives, but we cannot meet the demands due to budget constraints, specifically the lack of teachers. Students are left to choose a study hall or a course that does not support their career goal. In our last strategic planning process, our community overwhelmingly asked us to expand our academies and to develop additional programs that meet their child's college and career goals—types of provisions the state sites in code as secondary education initiatives to support student achievement (6A:13-2.2). And, while Kingsway has the talent to create the programs, we do not have the money.

Because of our current situation, class sizes continue to grow significantly. In our middle school, 98 classes have a class size of 30 or greater with many of the remaining classes just one or two students away from this threshold. Yet, classrooms remain empty. While Kingsway has the physical space to accommodate this population, we do not have the funding to hire the teachers to reduce class size to appropriate numbers. To be clear, when I discuss these numbers, I am referring to our current situation. Next year, with our projected incoming 7th grade class of approximately 492 students – our situation becomes even more critical. Without our fair share of state funding, nearly every class at the middle school next year will have a class size of 30 or greater. In the high school, it is not uncommon to walk into a physical education class with more than 40 students assigned to one teacher. When class size reaches this level, we have to be concerned about student safety in addition to student learning.

It is because of the dedicated administrators, faculty and staff that refuse to give up on our kids that Kingsway continues to push forward and produce successful and prepared students. Unfortunately, this is done without the state's support that is owed to them. Kingsway's students are entering into the same competitive environment as those just three miles down the street receiving at or above the statewide average. Yet, the state's practice of not funding the formula has generated an unlevelled playing field for our kids. Because of the state's failure to support our students, I fear they will continue to miss out on academic experiences that would provide them with a rounded education and focused college and career track.

I ask, today, for your voice in this fight so that we can ensure our students and community receive what is owed to them. I want to make it clear, that we are not asking for more than our share; we are asking only for what our students and communities have been promised under New Jersey's School Funding Formula. Thank you.

Respectfully yours,

Patricia Calandro
Chief Academic Officer





KINGSWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Committed to Excellence

*Dr. James J. Lavender
Superintendent of Schools*

Testimony provided by Dr. James J. Lavender, Superintendent of the Kingsway Regional School District on Tuesday, February 7, 2017 before the Assembly Education Committee on School Funding.

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen of the Assembly Education Committees. My name is Jim Lavender and I am the Superintendent of the Kingsway Regional School District, a position I've held since 2010.

With a population that has increased by more than 1,405 students over the last fifteen years, Kingsway has been labeled one of the State's fastest growing school districts. We are also ~~ranked~~ ~~one of the fastest growing~~ ~~one of the~~ ~~most~~ ~~underfunded~~ ~~school~~ ~~districts~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~State~~. In the current year, state aid per pupil equaled \$3,770, a 29% reduction since 2001.

As you can imagine, the contradiction between unrelenting pupil enrollment growth and state aid reductions per pupil has placed extraordinary demands on our facilities, programs, and staff.

The burden to fund our school district has consistently been shifted to our local taxpayers. Where state aid per pupil has decreased by 29%, local property taxes per pupil have increased by more than 142%, from \$3,549 in 2001 to \$8,600 in 2016. In fact, had the Kingsway Regional been funded at the levels the SFRA phase-in promised in 2008, we would have levied \$32.8 million dollars less than we did in the nine years since SFRA was adopted.

The continued failure by the State of New Jersey to recognize our plight cannot be ignored. To illustrate this point, I can show that approximately 70% of our State's school districts do not receive the funding they are entitled under SFRA. That is close to 1 million New Jersey students receive less than they are entitled.

In District 39, 22 of the 26 school Districts are underfunded, including the Westwood Regional School District which receives just 57% of full SFRA funding. In District 36, 16 of 16 school
Home of the Dragons

districts are underfunded, including Little Ferry Boro, which receives just 17% of state funding. In fact, I can cite examples in every Legislative District throughout this State, including Delran at 46%, Bloomfield at 40%, Bayonne City at 51%, Fairview Boro at 37% and the Kingsway Regional School District, which receives just 46% of our fair share. And there are many more.

All while a minority of schools receive more than their fair share, including Brick Township in Ocean County which receives 284% of their fair share and Hoboken City in Hudson County which receives 335%.

The truth is that New Jersey's Legislature should be applauded for the work they did to rectify decades of underfunding the neediest students through the adoption of SFRA. However, the hold harmless provision implemented through the budget, arbitrarily disregarding SFRA, has resulted in the disparate treatment of NJ students in underfunded districts. How can a Governor of a State, a Commissioner of Education or any member of the legislature today, nine years after the implementation of the hold harmless provision, reasonably say that some students in the State of New Jersey are entitled to 284% of their school funding while other students are entitled to only 46%?

Assembly Committee, I implore you to address the inequity of funding throughout our State. I ask that the legislature reconfigure state funding amounts so that they conform to the SFRA and omit the "hold harmless" provision from the budget. This will ensure that every student receives their constitutionally guaranteed education funding. I am asking that you intervene now, and in time before we strike our operating budgets for the 2017-18 school year, and protect every student in New Jersey and ensure that every student receives a thorough and efficient education. Our students, our faculty and our taxpayers cannot afford to be ignored another year.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony.

Very truly yours,



Dr. James J. Lavender
Superintendent of Schools





KINGSWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Committed to Excellence

*Dr. James J. Lavender, ext. 4205
Superintendent of Schools*

*Mr. Jason Schimpf, ext. 4203
School Business Administrator*

TESTIMONY AS PROVIDED BY JASON SCHIMPF, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR, KINGSWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, ON FEBRUARY 7, 2017 BEFORE THE NJ ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Good evening and thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Jason Schimpf and I am the Business Administrator for the Kingsway Regional School District. I have held this position since October of 2011 and have a total of sixteen years' experience in the field of public school administration.

As you all know, in 2008, the New Jersey Legislature enacted a new school funding formula, the School Funding Reform Act, or "SFRA." In 2009, the State Supreme Court found the SFRA constitutional, not just for students in the districts formerly known as Abbott, but for all students statewide. With that decision came two conditions in order for the SFRA to continue constitutionality. 1 – the formula must be fully funded for the first three years; and 2 – the formula must be reviewed to make sure it is functioning properly. Neither of these conditions were met and in May of 2011 the State Supreme Court ruled that the State had violated its Abbott directive after mass cuts to school funding in fiscal year 2011 and ordered the State to fully fund the formula in 2011-12. However, that ruling was limited to the 31 districts formerly known as Abbott districts and did not assist the non-Abbott districts that were underfunded, and in some cases severely.

The full funding of the SFRA, or lack thereof, was problem number one for school districts. In 2016-17 the SFRA was underfunded by approximately \$900 million. Since the inception of SFRA in 2008, the State has underfunded its schools by more than \$8 billion.

Problem number two was the inclusion of the "hold harmless" provision within the SFRA. In order to ensure that no district saw a decrease in State aid from their 2007-08 levels, the legislature amended the SFRA at the last minute to include a "hold harmless" provision. This

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www.krsd.org

provision was meant to be temporary in order to slowly bring the overfunded districts back down to 100% of SFRA funding over a period of five years. As you all know, this too has not happened and has created large inequities in school funding. In an Education Funding Report prepared by then Commissioner of Education, Christopher Cerf in 2012, when referring to Adjustment Aid he said, “It is a symbol of the old Trenton; a paean to the longstanding tradition of refusing to make hard choices even when hard choices are in order and failing to make hard choices will cost taxpayers greatly.” The “hold harmless” provision also prevented districts with growing enrollments, like Kingsway, from receiving additional aid while holding districts with declining enrollments level. According to the Education Law Center, nearly \$567 million was allocated to districts in the form of adjustment aid in 2015-16 alone. Of that \$567 million, nearly \$300 million went to districts already spending above their adequacy levels. This is \$567 million in aid calculated outside of the SFRA and distributed to hundreds of school districts that are not entitled to those funds.

Problem number three is how the school aid is allocated amongst the State’s school districts. In 2016-17, 212 school districts will receive more than 100% of their state aid. Conversely, 379 other districts will receive less than 100% of their state aid, with 239 of them receiving less than 70%.

The question that has to be asked is “why?” Why do the districts that have been overfunded for years continue to be held harmless when Kingsway, and many other districts, continue to be shortchanged? Kingsway has had to survive with less than its fair share of state aid each year for more than a decade. Enrollment continues to increase at a rate of approximately 5% each year. Kingsway’s taxpayers already contribute more than their local fair share as calculated by the SFRA and Kingsway will spend roughly \$9 million dollars below its adequacy budget in 2016-17, or less than \$3,500 per pupil than it should to provide a thorough and efficient education as calculated by the State’s own formula. Kingsway is also the lowest spending 7-12 regional school district in the State of New Jersey, with a budgetary per pupil cost of \$10,537 in 2015-16. Far below the state average of \$15,296. So I ask why would reducing aid to those Districts that are overfunded, in a reasonable way, be any more catastrophic to them than what Kingsway, and many other underfunded districts have had endure?



We are doing our part. We have made it work, but we cannot stretch the dollar any further at Kingsway. Our resident taxpayers cannot afford anymore. Due to our growth we have had to expand our facilities and have taken on more than \$40 million in debt to do so. This has only exacerbated our funding struggles and continues to cripple our residents' ability to pay. The inequitable distribution of school aid has gone on for way too long. Our school district, and the many others that are underfunded, deserve their fair share.

The solution is simple and requires no additional legislation. The SFRA already exists and provides generous, overall funding to school districts. We are simply asking the Governor, Legislature, and Commissioner of Education to abide by it. Begin to ween the overfunded, over adequacy districts off of adjustment aid and reallocate those dollars to the underfunded districts. Of course, full funding of the SFRA is the ultimate goal, but, at Kingsway, we understand budgetary constraints better than most and realize the State cannot simply add \$1 billion to school funding next year. However, if the adjustment aid of nearly \$600 million per year is paired with modest overall increases to school funding over the next five years, we can get to a point where the State is fully funding the SFRA. What could be more fair than all New Jersey school districts funded at 100% of SFRA?

Thank you for your time.



Pitman Public Schools

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Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee for coming to South Jersey for this hearing. My purpose in coming this evening is to share my perspective on the current school funding debate, and to ask for your careful consideration of the actions that may ultimately be taken.

I am the Superintendent of Schools in Pitman, a community just a short distance from here; my school district serves almost 1,500 students in five schools from grades Pre-K through 12, and has a long standing reputation of providing an exceptional educational experience for our students.

In the discourse regarding school funding and the various data points that have been shared over the past 12-18 months, my district might be regarded as one of the lucky ones – recent numbers suggest that our funding levels sit slightly above 100% of the 2008 formula. As such, I'm here to represent the side of this issue which has concerns about the implementation of any plan to reform the current situation through significant adjustments in state support. Depending on which numbers you look at, my district stands to lose anywhere from a modest amount up to close to 20% of its annual state aid allocation under a plan to phase out hold harmless funding. While I can appreciate the concerns of school districts that have not received state funding to which they and their students may be entitled, my concern lies in any "solution" that has a dramatically negative impact on the students and the community that I serve.

I appreciate and understand the issue of fairness and equity that are central to these deliberations. I merely ask that lawmakers avoid a "one size fits all" approach to a more equitable distribution of limited state funds. The different circumstances of various communities demands a more nuanced evaluation and implementation. For example, the community of Pitman continues to suffer the negative impact of the closing of the Sony plant several years ago. What had once been the largest employer and taxpayer in the town now sits nearly empty and underutilized. The property, once valued at \$18 million dollars, is now listed with an assessed value of \$3 million dollars; as a result, the burden of paying the costs of providing municipal services and running the public schools have been dramatically shifted to homeowners. To compound this problem by significantly reducing state support to the school district would fundamentally impact the quality of education of children in my community.

To be clear, I am not opposed to a resolution to the concerns of underfunded school districts; those districts should be funded at 100% of the formula. My primary concern is to ensure that my district is fully funded as well, and that any necessary adjustments are made in a thoughtful and deliberate way that considers the unique challenges faced by each community and the impact that those adjustments would have on those children. I am aware that it has been proposed to allocate additional money in funding as part of concurrent adjustments in aid to districts; short of that funding materializing, however, I worry that across the board cuts in aid will pit school districts and communities against one another in a battle for a limited pool of funds.

Again, thank you for allowing me to speak at this hearing, and I'd be more than happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Building on our unique traditions, the mission of the Pitman School District, in partnership with families and our community, is to educate all students through exceptional learning experiences to be discerning, ethical, confident citizens. It is the expectation of this school district that all pupils achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at all grade levels.

D.J.R.



CLEMENTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

4 Audubon Ave.
Clementon, NJ 08021



The Clementon Borough is located in Camden County and is approximately two (2) square miles. We are a Preschool to 8th grade school district with approximately 440 students currently enrolled and 76 staff members. Our free and reduced lunch rate is 62%. We are classified as a Schoolwide Title I district and categorized as District Factor Group B. Our entire district is run by only three (3) administrators who hold multiple positions. Our operating budget is \$12.5 million.

We know you are hearing testimony from various schools but we wanted to showcase our district who has been fiscally responsible by increasing the tax levy by 1% for the past two years while still providing a successful educational program to increase student achievement.

However, should our district receive any reductions in aid, these are on the table to eliminate:

- Reduce full day kindergarten to half-day kindergarten which would cause us to be out of compliance with NJAC 6A:13-3.2
- Eliminate all afterschool activities such as sports and performing arts
- Eliminate all special area classes such as Music, STEM, Art, Spanish, Physical Education/Health, and Library. The regular classroom teachers would have to teach these subjects that they have not been trained in.
- Increase class size which would cause us to be in out of compliance with NJAC 6A:13.3.1
- Eliminate all remedial classes for students who need additional academic support.
- Reduction In Force (RIF) of certificated and non-certificated staff

Items in the budget that are unpredictable and are unknown each year:

- Transportation
- Homeless
- Special Education Out of District Placements – Tuition is not regulated and they can charge a district any dollar amount.
- Children incarcerated
- Children placed by DCP&P or other agencies, such as group homes



ACADEMIC SUCCESS

2015 & 2016 PARCC Highlights

- 2016 – **Grades 3-8 Math and ELA outperformed** both the state and PARCC states.
- Based on the overall scores from the ESEA Accountability Profiles of districts with grades K-8 and compared to other districts in Camden County who are classified with significantly higher District Factor Groups, such as GH, I, and J – Clementon ranked **2nd in ELA and 6th in Math**
- DFG B District Comparisons – Clementon ranked **2nd in ELA and 4th in Math**
- 2016 – Teacher Median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP) in the district = 3.7 which is in the highly effective range.
- 2015 – In both ELA and Math, the subgroup of Economically Disadvantaged **outperformed** all other districts in Camden County in passing PARCC.

2016 Summer Book Exchange

- 88% of students who attended the Summer Book Exchange stayed on their independent reading level when they returned to school in September 2016.
- Doubled the participation rate of students attending the summer book exchange from 75 in 2015 to 150 in 2016.

Student Growth Percentiles

- 86% in ELA and 80% in Math - Students are achieving typical/high growth on PARCC when compared from 2015 to 2016.

2013-2014 Performance Report

- **Academic Performance** was *high* when compared with our peers
- **Student growth** performance was *very high* when compared to schools across the state and compared to our peers
- In **Student Growth**, the school **outperforms 81%** of schools statewide, **outperforms 93%** of schools educating students with similar demographic characteristics, the school is **meeting 100% of its performance targets**.

2017 GreatSchools Rating

- 8 out of 10 for test scores and student growth

In the event there is a loss in funding, the items listed will be eliminated and will affect the student success we have built in this district.

CLEMENTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

4 Audubon Ave.

Clementon, NJ 08021

Lynn DiPietropolo, Chief School Administrator

856-783-2300 x1014

My name is Rita Romeu, and I am a newly elected Committee woman for Chesterfield Township. I want to thank all of you for soliciting comments from the public on one of the most important issues in New Jersey.

During my campaigning, I spoke to many voters in my township. This issue, besides the proposed compressor station and pipeline, was the most discussed and questioned. People are very concerned about Chesterfield's situation. Property taxes have skyrocketed, and our schools are struggling to meet basic needs.

It is easy to chalk these funding gaps up to the fact that there is not a lot of money floating around the State right now. It is easy to say the State cannot afford to provide large amounts of aid to school districts. But, that is not the problem here. The situation I just described in Chesterfield is not the story throughout the State. There are some districts that are getting significantly more in aid than they should.

Under funded districts – some facts –

There are 591 school districts in the state. 212 school districts are receiving more than 100% of SFRA uncapped funding, and 379 schools are receiving less than 100%, 345 of those are receiving less than 85%, the amount the formula is currently funded at. This leaves more than half of the school districts in the State below the 85% mark of the current funding formula. Chesterfield is funded at only 11%. Yes, you heard that correct, 11%. We are receiving 11% of the uncapped aid we should according to the SFRA.

There are over 900,000 students in under aided school districts, while there are just over 300,000 students in overfunded districts. Collectively underfunded districts are paying \$1.9 billion above their fair share because of the inactivity of the legislature.

To get back to Chesterfield - we are pinching pennies and making difficult financial decisions that we would not have to make if we were even close to being properly funded by the State. Absorbing unexpected expenses is difficult when running on a tight budget the way we do each year.

Chesterfield is the second lowest per pupil spending district in Burlington County, and we are paying the second highest taxes in the Burlington County. This is because we are receiving such a low percentage of our State Aid. Chesterfield is paying 139% of our fair share. We cannot afford to pay more. Our fair share is \$6,492,630 and we are paying \$9,040,635. Even with all that we are still under adequacy. The residents of Chesterfield cannot pay more.

We need assistance and we are not asking for anything more than what the State of New Jersey has determined to be our fair share of aid.

The SFRA at its core is not the problem. If followed, with the exception of a few provisions, it would provide what I believe to be a fair distribution of state funds to districts across the state. However, there are a few provisions in the law that are problematic. First is the hold harmless provision. If a district has decreased enrollment or an increase in their tax base it only makes sense for the aid they receive to reflect that. Isn't that the intention of the formula? The bill also has an enrollment cap. If you aren't going to cap our growth please don't cap our aid. Chesterfield has experienced significant enrollment increases for many years while the aid we receive from the state has stayed flat exacerbating the issues we face from under funding. I understand why provisions like this make their way into legislation. Legislators look out for their own districts because that is their job. But.... School funding is so important that it requires impartial arbiters.

The residents of Chesterfield and other underfunded districts cannot wait any longer for action. We need help and we need it now, we cannot wait another year. We have been underfunded for long enough.

**Testimony Before the New Jersey Assembly Education Committee
Hearing on School Funding
Camden County Technical School
Tuesday, February 7, 2017**

By Joseph Meloche, EdD, Superintendent, Cherry Hill Public School District

Members of the committee, colleagues, and community members, my name is Joseph Meloche, I am the proud superintendent of the Cherry Hill Public School District in Camden County. I am grateful for the opportunity to address the committee and to humanize the impact the current approach to school funding has on the children of the Cherry Hill School District.

Cherry Hill is an incredible community in which to live and to work and especially to raise a family. Cherry Hill is where I grew up, where I attended school, and where my wife and I are raising our four children. The Cherry Hill School District is a wonderfully diverse tapestry of families of so many different backgrounds and means. Among our 11,254 children, 57 languages are spoken at home, more than 2,500 are bilingual, and in our six Title I schools, nearly 1 in 3 children are on Free or Reduced Lunch.

Our community supports education, in fact, our community demands a top quality education for each of our children. I am incredibly proud of our outcomes and our successes and our test scores and the external validation that we received – in fact, we were notified yesterday that the Cherry Hill School District was named a State District of Character!

The Board of Education in Cherry Hill, as a fluid body has maintained focus on student achievement and on fiscal responsibility. We have taken advantage of myriad opportunities to partner with the township on projects and squeeze everything we are able from our resources.

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But we are at a crossroads – the 81% of our budget that is funded by our community as a result of the disproportionate amount of state aide that we receive is negatively impacting our children. Cherry Hill receives about \$1,100 per child, far below what the funding formula indicates we should receive. I currently have Advanced Placement classes at the high school level in excess of 40 students. We have eliminated staff, we have eliminated professional development opportunities, we have eliminated extra-curricular opportunities, we have frozen spending, and we have even heralded the nostalgic value of chalk in one of our middle schools instead of installing white boards. We allow students to carry more books because we have lockers that are unusable and must be replaced, just not yet. We have buildings that are tired at best – in fact, I had a legislator suggest creating a crisis in the community by allowing a building to be condemned to shed light on the inadequacy of the current state of funding. We are at a crisis. Today. We bandage and polish and shine and accommodate and explain to our parents that we are focusing on instruction and relationships and outcomes – which are critical and in which we are so successful – and we ask them look beyond the facilities, and the pot holes, the equipment that is not replaced and innovative programs that are not pursued. That while our neighbors have full day kindergarten, or one to one technology initiatives, we do not.

Fair funding? On behalf of the Cherry Hill School District, I want equitable funding. I want funding based on who we are today, in 2017, not who we were in 2005, or 1995, or 1985. I want legislature to uphold the commitment that was established in the adoption of the funding formula

I am grateful for the opportunity to address the committee. Thank you for your time and your willingness to support children.

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Testimony to the NJ Assembly Education Committee: School Funding

February 7, 2017

Jorden Schiff, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools, Hillsborough Township, NJ 08844

I would like to begin by thanking the Chair and Members of the Committee for inviting our comments on school funding. My name is Jorden Schiff and I am the proud superintendent of the Hillsborough Township Public Schools. In addition to serving as the Hillsborough Superintendent, I am also the Chair of the NJASA Legislative Committee, as well as the President of the Garden State Coalition of Schools.

The purpose of our testimony is to discuss how school funding decisions at the state and local levels affect the programs and services for NJ public school students. We would like to provide a historical perspective with specific data and evidence to support the fact that Direct Aid to Schools is not being funded at levels that will allow for the sustainability of educational programs for our students (see Charts 1-3). School funding issues are additionally complicated by our local school boards' inability to manage expenses outside of the boards' control that exceed the 2% property tax cap. As costs that are outside of the boards' control increase beyond 2%, superintendents are faced with the difficult task of eliminating programs, deferring maintenance, and reducing teachers and staff.

During 2009, the height of the recession, state aid to school districts was reduced by five percent of the district's entire operating budget. Let me reiterate, not five percent of state aid was reduced, but five percent of our operating budgets. Although superintendents were told to prepare for reductions in state aid of 5, 10, or 15%, the actual reductions in many districts were much higher leading to significant layoffs, furloughs, privatization, and salary freezes across the state. We sought and achieved greater efficiencies and reduced costs in many budgetary areas, even becoming entrepreneurial and creating revenue generating programs. Chapter 78 passed insurance costs from the taxpayers to public employees, increasing contributions for the past four years. The additional revenue from our employees' healthcare contributions has now reached the last year of the four-year phase-in period; as a result, no additional revenue will be realized to off-set the annual increases in healthcare costs in future years.

Special education costs are increasing throughout the state at a rate that exceeds 2% per year. As these costs continue to rise beyond the cap, resources will need to be reallocated from general education to special education. We have never been a state where we educate one child at the expense of another. We educate all children, regardless of ability or disability.

In sum, special education cost increases, flat state aid, and revenue caps have compromised our ability to sustain the quality of our educational programs for the long run. We are beginning to see a troubling trend in student achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) performance that may indicate that New Jersey is beginning to lose its standing as one of the top performing states in the nation (see Chart 4). The future will most likely find increases in property taxes and the reduction of programs for the children in our care unless we begin to consider alternatives to the current status quo.

As a school district leader, I appreciate the value of not only identifying a problem, but also providing possible solutions. We have five solutions that will provide a sustainable pathway to protect the quality of the educational experience that the citizens of New Jersey have come to expect from our public schools:

- **Direct Aid to Schools Must be Increased at a Rate Identical to the Percentage Increase in the Overall State Budget** (see Chart 1)

Budgets are the financial representation of an organization's priorities. When the state has additional monies, it speaks volumes about the state's priorities when one examines how those additional dollars are allocated. During FY16 the state budget increased by over \$1 billion while Direct Aid to Schools remained flat. Most of the increase funded public employee pensions and retirees' healthcare costs. The state has spent the last seven years prioritizing the needs of adults over the needs of children. We must be able to do both.

- **Use the Percentage Increase to Direct Aid to Schools to Begin the Process of Fully Funding SFRA, Maintain the Hold Harmless Provision, and Prioritize Districts That Have Been Significantly Underfunded**

Fully funding the SFRA will take time, but it is very important that the state begin the process now and prioritize districts that have the following profile:

- a. Underfunded by SFRA standards*
- b. Under Adequacy*
- c. Taxing Beyond the Communities' Fair Share*

These districts are in crisis and must be addressed immediately. Other districts should receive additional monies proportional to their needs, until SFRA is fully funded. At that time, total state aid would increase by the percentage of the revenue increases in the state budget while SFRA is accurately allocated.

- **Return Greater Control and Decision-Making to Local School Boards**

Local school board members are publicly elected or appointed officials who represent and live in the communities they serve. They are the best people to determine taxation policy that balance the needs of the students with the community's ability to pay. Each township, borough, village, and city is unique and has its own complexity and needs. Broad-brushing, one-size-fits-all policy from Trenton, fails to recognize and appreciate each community's unique situation. Policy-makers in Trenton are not held accountable in the same way that a local school board is held to account by their community. Any costs outside of a board's control that extends beyond the 2% property tax cap should be part of an automatic adjustment process as is done currently with the healthcare adjustment.

- **Recognize Educational Services Commissions (ESC) as an Alternative to Expensive Out-of-District Placements for Special Needs Children (see Chart 5)**

Part of the mission of all the Educational Services Commissions throughout the state is to provide special services that are not available in local districts. Similar services are provided by private schools at a greater cost. It is important that equivalent services are provided in an effective and efficient manner. The attached document illustrates potential cost savings while providing equivalent services for our out-of-district special needs students.

- **Explore the Ability to Require Related Services Expenses for Special Needs Children to be Claimed Against the Parents' Private Insurance Carrier and Have the School District Fund Any Out-of-Pocket Expenses**

Currently, students who qualify for Medicaid and receive certain special education services qualify for a program (SEMI) that reimburses the local school district for specific special services. Similar to the SEMI program, parents of students with special needs could submit a claim to their private insurance carrier for services that are covered within their private plans. The school district would then cover any out-of-pocket expenses. Protections would need to be put in place to make certain that insurance carriers do not increase premiums for the parents of special needs children.

In closing, I would like to thank the committee members for listening and giving serious consideration to my testimony.

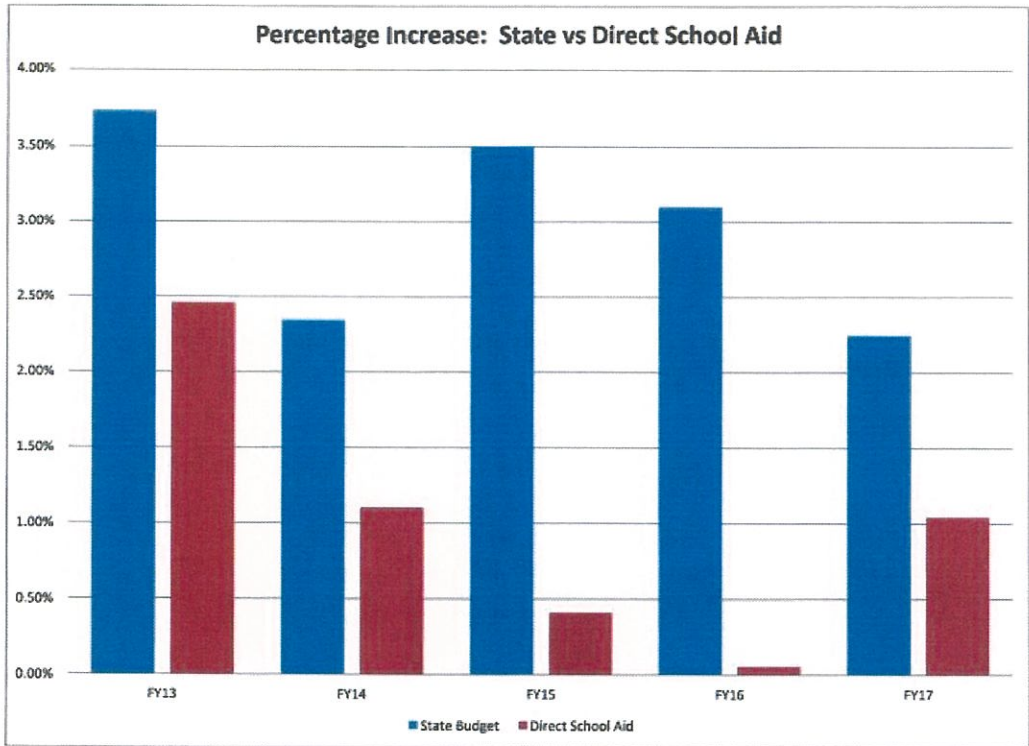


Chart 1

Percent increases in the State Budget have outpaced the percent increase of Direct School Aid for the past five years.

Data Source: NJ Budget Summaries FY13-FY17

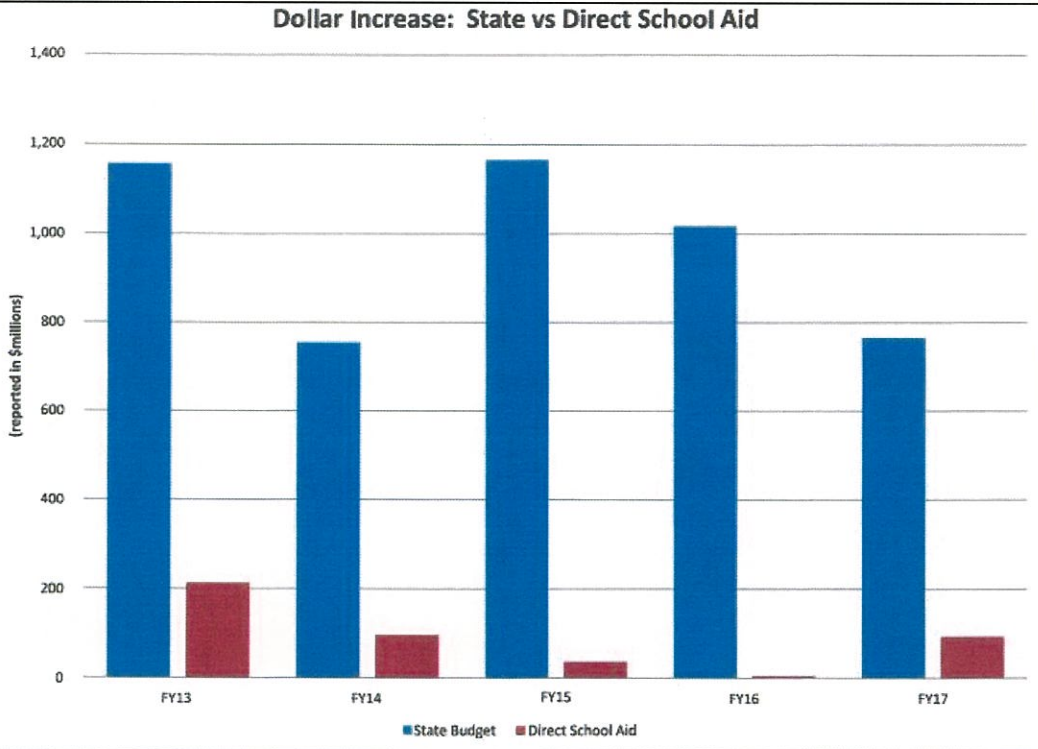


Chart 2

New spending in the State Budget for FY13, 15, and 16 were over a \$ billion each year. Direct School Aid was fraction of those increases. Chart 3 shows the impact of state funding decisions on Hillsborough Public Schools.

Data Source: NJ Budget Summaries FY13-FY17

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State Aid for 2009-2017

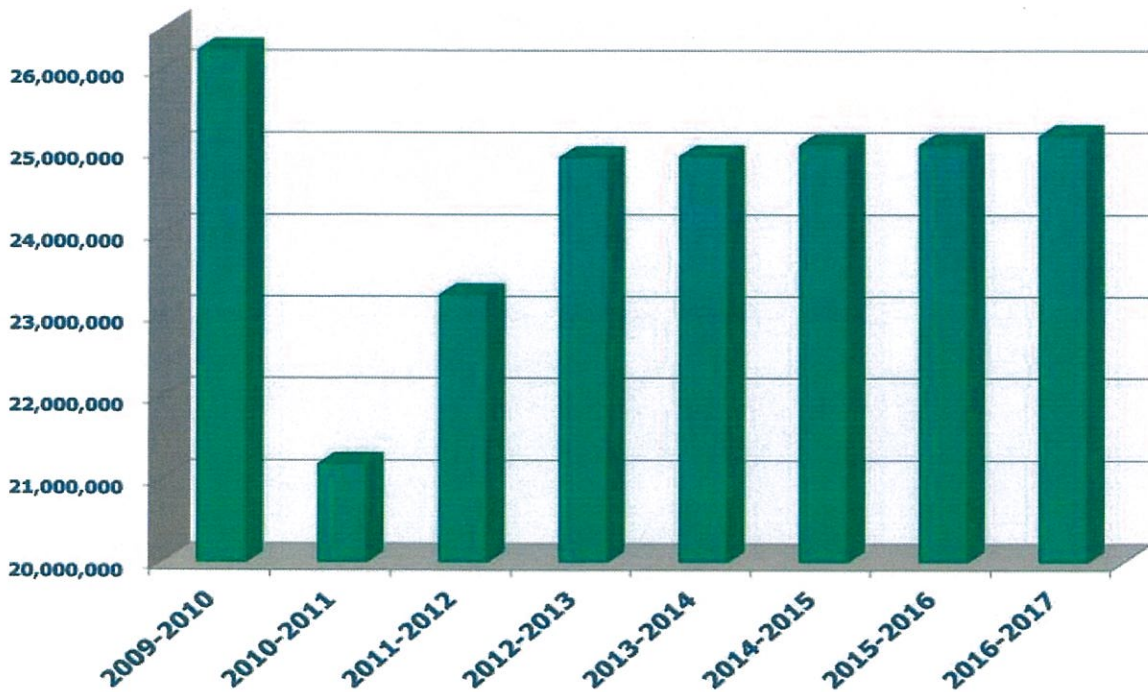


Chart 3

Hillsborough state aid allocation from FY10 to FY17 shows flat funding for five consecutive years. The drop in state aid for FY11 was due to the impact of the national recession.

Data Source: State Aid Summaries for Hillsborough Township Public Schools

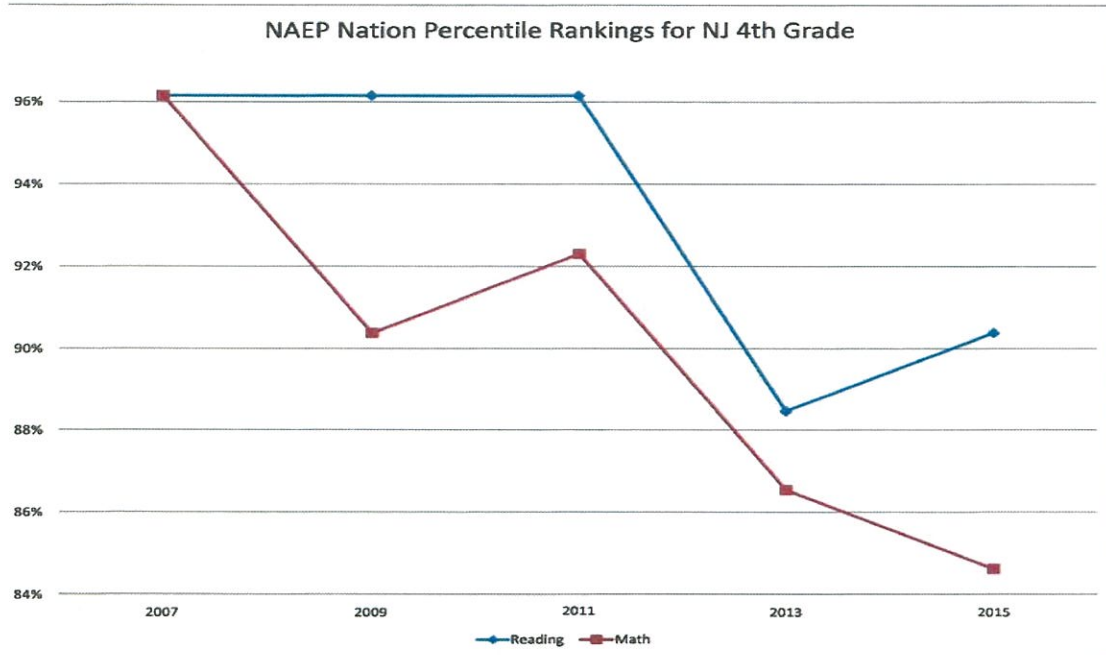


Chart 4

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) compares state performance across various grades and content areas. NJ 4th grade results show a decline in both reading and math since 2011.

Data Source: Rankings converted to percentiles. <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/statecomparisons/>

2016-2017 Tuition Rates- SCESC vs. Private Schools for Students with Disabilities
 *Based on Private Schools for Students with Disabilities Tentative Tuition Rates 2016-2017 information from NJDOE.

Private School	County	Their Tuition for 2016-2017	SCESC Tuition for Academy 2016-2017	Cost Difference	SCESC Tuition for Career Center 2016-2017	Cost Difference
Bonnie Brae School	Somerset	\$77,738	\$46,889	(\$30,849)	\$59,150	(\$18,588)
The Center School	Somerset	\$67,038	\$46,889	(\$20,149)	\$59,150	(\$7,888)
East Mountain School	Somerset	\$73,766	\$46,889	(\$26,877)	\$59,150	(\$14,616)
Green Brook Academy	Somerset	\$73,627	\$46,889	(\$26,738)	\$59,150	(\$14,477)
Honor Ridge (formerly Somerset Hills School)	Somerset	\$85,582	\$46,889	(\$38,693)	\$59,150	(\$26,432)
Lord Stirling School	Somerset	\$103,294	\$46,889	(\$56,405)	\$59,150	(\$44,144)
Montgomery School	Somerset	\$66,094	\$46,889	(\$19,205)	\$59,150	(\$6,944)
New Road School	Somerset	\$56,418	\$46,889	(\$9,529)	\$59,150	\$2,732
Rock Brook School	Somerset	\$74,785	\$46,889	(\$27,896)	\$59,150	(\$15,635)
Gateway School	Middlesex	\$62,057	\$46,889	(\$15,168)	\$59,150	(\$2,907)
New Road School	Middlesex	\$60,534	\$46,889	(\$13,645)	\$59,150	(\$1,384)
You and Me School	Middlesex	\$57,002	\$46,889	(\$10,113)	\$59,150	\$2,148
C.P.C. High Point	Monmouth	\$73,795	\$46,889	(\$26,906)	\$59,150	(\$14,645)
Coastal Learning Center	Monmouth	\$59,367	\$46,889	(\$12,478)	\$59,150	(\$217)
Collier	Monmouth	\$65,952	\$46,889	(\$19,063)	\$59,150	(\$6,802)
Hawkswood School	Monmouth	\$75,301	\$46,889	(\$28,412)	\$59,150	(\$16,151)
Rugby School	Monmouth	\$78,918	\$46,889	(\$32,029)	\$59,150	(\$19,768)
Oakwood School	Monmouth	\$51,618	\$46,889	(\$4,729)	\$59,150	\$7,532
Alpha School	Ocean	\$64,690	\$46,889	(\$17,801)	\$59,150	(\$5,540)
The Education Academy	Ocean	\$60,024	\$46,889	(\$13,135)	\$59,150	(\$874)
Lehmann School	Ocean	\$72,023	\$46,889	(\$25,134)	\$59,150	(\$12,873)
New Road School	Ocean	\$60,051	\$46,889	(\$13,162)	\$59,150	(\$901)
Ocean Academy	Ocean	\$55,931	\$46,889	(\$9,042)	\$59,150	\$3,219
Deron School	Union	\$64,514	\$46,889	(\$17,625)	\$59,150	(\$5,364)
First Children's School	Union	\$80,037	\$46,889	(\$33,148)	\$59,150	(\$20,887)
Newmark High School	Union	\$59,376	\$46,889	(\$12,487)	\$59,150	(\$226)
Newmark School	Union	\$56,247	\$46,889	(\$9,358)	\$59,150	\$2,903

Chart 5

The chart about shows the Somerset County Educational Services Commission's out-of-district tuition rates for special needs students as compared with other private schools providing equivalent services. All costs indicated in red are savings to the local communities.

Data Source: SCESC Office of the Superintendent