

APPENDIX

Little Ferry Public Schools

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Home of Memorial School

A "Governor's School of Excellence"

Mr. Frank R. Scarafile
Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Dennis Frohnapfel
Interim Business Admin./Bd. Sect'y

February, 2017

The following is testimony from the Little Ferry Board of Education, represented by Frank R. Scarafile, Superintendent of Schools, and Dr. Dennis Frohnapfel, Interim Business Administrator.

School funding has been a tricky business in New Jersey for quite some time. I am able to speak to this topic from my experiences as a High School Principal, in an Abbott district (Union City), 2000-2003 and my current position as Superintendent of Schools in Little Ferry from 2003-present. Upon arrival in Little Ferry, I began with an approximate budget of \$15 million dollars a year to support the 1,000 students who make-up the population from grades Pre-K -8th grade in two schools, as well as being responsible for over 400 high school students who we pay tuition directly for, either to Ridgefield Park or the County Schools, Bergen Tech and the Academies of Bergen County. Presently, the budget is a \$20 million dollar budget, which is supported by \$18 million dollars from the taxpayer.

Over the years, our State & Federal aid has remained relatively flat, except for the 2009-10 school year, when we were cut 5% of our school budget in state aid. This cut represented approximately \$880,000 that year. Those cuts did some serious damage to our budget. Our tuition costs to the high schools increased and our aid was considerably less. We lost ten (10) positions in the district overall, from the Board Office, to at least eight (8) teachers, three (3) of which were from the Art Department. It took the district seven (7) years to get almost all of the eliminated positions back.

Over the course of my years, we were devastated with Superstorm Sandy, which did major damage to the schools. One of our two school buildings, is a 100 year old structure that is an encapsulated asbestos nightmare. Putting money into that building is not a good investment. Being in a send-receive relationship for high school services has become a burden with our sister district, Ridgefield Park, who has hit the proverbial fiscal cliff, whereby 2% increases have caught up to them.

Additional funding would be a godsend to the Little Ferry Public School District. We have seen large increases in students who speak a home language other than English. We are becoming very close to not qualifying for a Bilingual Education

waiver from the State, as our numbers are increasing in certain languages, mainly Arabic. Programmatically, Bilingual Education would be something that has to be addressed. Updated materials to support our many English-Language Arts and Mathematics initiatives would be helpful. We are mandated to begin the Next Generation Science Standards for the next school year. We have set aside a considerable amount of resources to that initiative that effectively “eats up” a good portion of this years’ curriculum budget. The elementary school social studies program is dated and has to be addressed. Modern, up-to-date Science labs would be a much welcomed addition to encourage students to experience hands-on science. A modern “Arts Suite” is another item that would be a tremendous addition, in order to develop musical and artistic talent. We are more interested in purchasing to support the curriculum; we are not looking to add bodies, because we would like to give our educators curriculum items that are current. This past year, we eliminated the position of Guidance Counselor. We brought in a Licensed Therapeutic Social Worker, because we thought the issues that we were dealing with were more to the social and emotional well-being of the students. We supplemented the guidance position by entering into a shared services agreement with Ridgefield Park.

We are very good at squeezing nickels, but other issues suffer. Addressing infrastructure concerns; boilers, air-conditioning updates, window replacements would be in order. The most important aspect of additional state funding would be the relief that can be passed to the over-taxed community which would be monumental. The Borough of Little Ferry is a blue-collar town that is pro-education; but a community of our size pays more tax dollars for education than some of the old Abbott districts, which have budgets 10 times the size of ours. I do not have the luxury to give the Borough a “tax vacation,” and not raise to the 2% cap as a good portion of this years’ raise will be paying for my high school students. Therefore, adding new things may not be in the cards. It would be a shame not to move to redistribute state aid as it is needed. After all, the make-up of many communities in Southern Bergen County, has changed drastically since the inception of the current funding formula. Little Ferry had 10% of it’s’ student population eligible for free and reduced lunch in 2003; today that number is 43% and growing; we are receiving less state and federal aid than we did in 2009-10. Overall, we have not received any additional state or federal aid in a very long time.

In closing, I want to thank the committee for allowing me to speak today. It is very promising that both houses of the state legislature has recognized the disparity and is attempting to redesign the school funding formula. While the committee is trying to develop a more equitable plan, I believe that this can be accomplished in phases. You certainly cannot strip certain districts of large amounts of money and expect them to continue to operate successfully. I’m sure, if there is a formula that

can be phased in over a period of say five (5) years that would work to help those who are struggling to make ends meet and continue to work within a finite budget that supports student success. The districts that are losing funds, should be able to perform a comprehensive restructuring that would enable them to succeed. Aid should be based on need, not entitlements.

WALLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"There is Power in Pride"

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Mr. James J. Albro
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February 13, 2017

NJ State Senate Select Committee on School Funding Fairness
Room 50
State House Annex
P.O. Box 068
Trenton, NJ 08625-0068

Dear Committee Members:

Pursuant to your meeting on school funding fairness that is to be held in Cliffside Park on February 14, 2017. Please accept my written testimony on behalf of the Board of Education for the Borough of Wallington.

The Wallington Public Schools is a small district in southern Bergen County, comprised of approximately 1330 students. Our district has been designated as an Abbott Rim District for at least the last ten years. This designation is due to a number of considerations, inclusive of:

- The fact that our district directly borders former Abbott Districts (Garfield and Passaic notably) suggests some similarities in the socio-economic status of our residents.
- Our DOE classification as a "B" district factor group (with "A" being the lowest relative socioeconomic status) carries with it the same challenges that face the former Abbott Districts.

One might think that carrying the designation of being an Abbott Rim district would bring with it some additional consideration when it comes to school funding for programs and/or facilities. The former Abbott districts, as you know, qualify for a number of fully and partially subsidized programs due to their distinction as high need districts. Unfortunately that is not the case in Wallington as rim districts like Wallington qualify for no more categories of funding than any of the Regular Operating Districts. This begs the question of why Wallington should be so designated or even classified as an Abbott Rim district at all?

At a time when state aid and other funding is very lean, I understand that it is difficult to meet the needs of constituent districts. However, I believe Wallington has certain unique circumstances that would require further inquiry into the manner in which we are funded. For example:

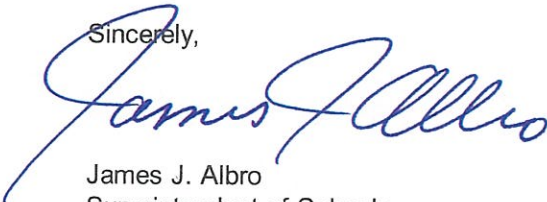
- Wallington has absorbed more than a 10% student population increase in the last few years. State Aid has remained largely flat among public schools, which in Wallington's case equates to a decrease in State Aid when you factor in such significant population growth. Many Bergen County districts have seen a decrease in student population in that same time, yet have received flat funding in State Aid. This equates to an increase in State aid when you factor in their population decrease.

- Wallington has been designated a "Bacon" district since 2006 indicating that our district is constitutionally underfunded. This unfairly compromises our ability to offer a "thorough and efficient" education to our students.
- Approximately 35% of our student population qualifies for either free or reduced lunch. This places us in a category that is very similar to that of many former Abbotts who receive a great deal of additional and discretionary funding for programs and facilities because of the low income and socio-economic status of the community and its residents.

Perhaps most notable for us at this time is the need for significant infrastructure improvements in our aging district. Our district (via referendum) has been able to secure some funding to address aging roofs, windows, doors, security upgrades, fire escapes, etc. in the past few years, however; there are still items that need to be addressed. Given our district's history of failed budgets (approximately 35 failed budgets in 40 years) it is unlikely that an additional referendum would be approved by the voters. The district is forced to find other ways to fund important infrastructure projects and programs. Most recently the district began a conversation with the Borough of Wallington about the possibility of bonding a number of major infrastructure repairs and replacements for our schools which could total over one million dollars. If approved, the district would be required to pay for this bonded project, and that funding would come directly from our regular operating budget which is subjected to the 2% cap. This is the same budget that ranks in the bottom 10% of all K-12 budgets in Bergen County and funds all of our academic programming from grades K-12. With the 2% cap on our annual budget it would not be possible to fund any project such as this without taking the funding from other areas of our budget. This would surely unfairly compromise some other necessary infrastructure improvements and ultimately our academic budget as well.

On behalf of the Wallington Board of Education I invite you to look carefully at the needs of your constituent districts, and understand that there are many similarities among school districts when it comes to the manner in which they are funded. However, there are surely special needs in districts such as Wallington that are simply not being addressed in the manner in which the State of NJ determines funding aid. The Board wishes its district to be fairly funded, and that can only happen when the allocation of funding can account for the needs of districts more effectively.

Sincerely,



James J. Albro
Superintendent of Schools

Cc: Wallington Board of Education
Norah Peck, Interim Executive County Superintendent

Testimony of Emil Carafa before the Senate Select Committee on School Funding Issues

February 14, 2017

Good morning Mr. President and members of the Senate Select Committee on School Funding Issues. I am Emil Carafa, the Principal of the Washington School in Lodi, New Jersey, an elementary school with 400 students in a district of 3,400 students. Let me welcome you to Bergen County and share with you the financial challenges we face in Lodi, a community I love and have served for many years, not only as a teacher and principal, but also as a Council member and currently, as Mayor.

The Lodi school district has five elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Our community is a working class community comprised of citizens from multiple cultures and languages. As a district factor group (DFG) B, we are a Title I district where all our students are Title I eligible. Some of our students arrive at our doors speaking Arabic, Turkish, Italian and Spanish as their first language. We serve many students with disabilities, with some students being educated in district and others in outside placements.

Today, I would like to share with you the impact that the State's failure to properly fund my district according to the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) has had on my school, my district and my community. Lodi has been significantly underfunded by the State in the amount of \$19.5 million this year alone! Currently, we receive approximately 43% of the state aid we are entitled to under the funding law. Lodi has been flat funded over the past 7 years, like all districts across New Jersey, despite rising costs, increased enrollments and new mandates from the state and federal government. Additionally, our district has been caught in a cycle of underspending where our capped budget is below adequacy levels, yet our community cannot afford to pay more in taxes even for the important goal of enhanced educational opportunities for our students.

In my school, which serves grades preK through five, I have sadly seen first-hand how the loss of state aid can impact the breadth of instructional programs and opportunities we can offer our students. At a time when our state curriculum standards set important system goals for college and career readiness, my students are using ten year old textbooks in reading, and social studies. As we move toward implementing the newly- adopted Next Generation Science Standards in our local curricula, my students are using science textbooks that are more than ten years old! In the important subject of the arts, my students do not have an art classroom, but instead experience "art on a cart" in their classrooms. We had to cut our elementary band several years ago due to costs, despite the valiant efforts of a teacher who volunteered to lead the band after hours for free. We cannot afford to offer students before and after school programs despite the strong need for them in my community. Similarly, we offer no intramurals or clubs in my school, although we do compete at the high school level in core sports.

In the area of technology, we are woefully behind our peers in other districts. My students do not have individual Chromebooks; in fact, we have 90 Chromebooks for 400 students in the building, a single technology lab and some computers in our library. We cannot afford technology upgrades and must repair outdated equipment rather than provide current technology to our students. Our technology expertise is limited to two technicians across seven school buildings. I can assure you- this does not

work for students or staff. I am concerned that the lack of these core educational resources will limit our students' chances for success in today's challenging world.

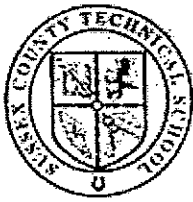
As principal, I can tell you first hand that quality staffing is the key to a school's success. Unfortunately, the lack of state funding has impacted our staffing levels and our ability to attract and retain high quality teachers and other key staff. Our salaries cannot compete with neighboring districts and this year alone, we are losing five quality teachers to other districts.

Our staffing levels have remained essentially flat over the past 7 years, despite the rising need for instructional coaches, guidance counselors and technology staff. We prioritize class size in order to provide students with the time and attention they deserve, yet we find our class sizes creeping up to 28 to 30 students per class in middle and high school. Our students have limited access to a guidance counselor since we share a part-time guidance counselor for only two days a week with another elementary school. Additionally, despite the diverse languages our students speak, we only have one English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in our school. We also share speech therapists and other specialized professionals to meet our student needs. I cannot emphasize enough how significant these staff members are to our efforts to move our students forward academically and developmentally, yet our inability to provide competitive salaries has led to contract impasse and the loss of key staff.

Consistent and adequate school funding is critical to my school's future. Our school has fought hard to cut costs wherever possible in order to maintain our school quality and our budget is lean. Our spending is focused on staff and instructional programs, there are no frills to cut. One budget area we have worked hard to maintain is our facilities, yet this is beginning to slip with deferred maintenance of current needs to future school years. We also face challenges in meeting both in-district and out of district special education costs, which in some instances are over \$80,000 for an individual student. We have also cancelled plans to provide full-day preK programs in our community despite the proven educational success of such programs and the strong need in our community.

My point in sharing all of this is illustrate the significant impact the State's underfunding of my school district has had on our students and the quality of learning opportunities that Lodi can provide. I am concerned that with rising standards and expectations for our students, that we will not be able to meet the critical benchmark of college and career readiness that our students deserve. As you consider issues of funding fairness, please keep my school and students in mind. Continued flat funding without running the funding formula has already eroded educational opportunity in my district. I ask you to begin to restore state levels to Lodi and to consider loosening the overly restrictive caps on our local budgets, particularly in high cost areas like insurances and special education in order to provide needed relief. The State must seek new revenue to meet the compelling needs in our schools, not only in Lodi, but in all communities in our State.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my concerns as a school leader and for travelling across New Jersey to understand this complex issue.



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Senate Select Committee on School Funding Hearing Testimony of Gus Modla, Superintendent February 14, 2017

Senate President Sweeney and members of the Select Committee:

I am Gus Modla, the superintendent and principal of Sussex County Technical School in Sparta. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Thank you for your commitment to addressing the funding inequities that have developed as New Jersey has moved farther and farther away from fully funding the School Funding Reform Act. We appreciate your willingness to travel around the state to get input from those of us on the frontlines.

I will focus my brief remarks today on the unique situation of county vocational school districts like Sussex Tech, which face special challenges with respect to school funding:

- We have an economic mission and need to remain responsive to emerging workforce needs. County vocational schools cannot simply put new programs or equipment upgrades on hold when funding gets tight. If we don't stay aligned with industry needs and expectations, then our programs will become irrelevant and our students will not be prepared for tomorrow's jobs.
- County vocational schools do not have the ability to levy taxes – we are dependent upon the county freeholders for our local tax levy. The county is subject to their own tax levy cap, and unfortunately our county has had to reduce funding for our vocational school over the past six years.

Sussex Tech has seen a 37% enrollment increase since 2009 in a county that is experiencing declining enrollment. This is indicative of student and parent demand for the type of career-focused education we offer to young people in Sussex County. Yet, despite our growth, our state aid has been cut almost 6% since 2009, and our county support has declined 11% since 2010-11.

The Sussex County Technical School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, parental status, physical disability, learning disability, or sexual orientation.

The School Funding Reform Act eliminated all per pupil categorical aid for secondary and adult vocational programs and shifted to a wealth-based formula. It also shifted 2/3 of our significant special education costs to the wealth-based formula, while the geographic cost index reduced our adequacy budget and aid level. The only way we were able to continue to offer high quality programs was because we received over \$1.3 million in adjustment aid that kept us whole during the transition to a wealth-based formula.

Sussex Tech spends below the average for county vocational-technical schools, but still our costs are higher than for regular high schools. The weight in the formula for vocational education (.25) does not fully recognize the cost for small hands-on classes and specialized shops and labs with the sophisticated equipment and technology needed to prepare our students for jobs in STEM, health care, culinary arts, building trades, automotive technology, and other areas.

As the Senate weighs the complex issues associated with school funding, we ask you to consider the impact of phasing out adjustment aid for county vocational school districts with stable or growing enrollment. As a countywide shared service, we depend on county funding and lack the authority to levy taxes for the local share of our budget.

We could not expect our county to fill the gap if adjustment aid is phased out. And we would not want to ask local districts to drastically increase their local share in the form of tuition, because we recognize that they face fiscal constraints of their own. Increasing the cost to local districts could negatively impact students and the economy if districts discourage young people from attending the county vocational schools.

County vocational-technical schools serve a critical purpose in New Jersey, preparing secondary and adult students for success in a technology-driven economy. We want to continue to offer technical education opportunities to as many students as possible.

For 2017-18, we ask the Legislature to avoid any aid reductions for county vocational schools, so that funding reallocations do not end up increasing costs for local districts and possibly limiting opportunities for students to attend county vocational schools.

For the longer term, the Legislature may want to consider restoring per pupil aid for county vocational school students, rather than the current wealth-based weight, so that all counties are funded equitably.

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



Testimony Before the Senate Select Committee on School Funding

Judy Savage, Executive Director

February 14, 2017

Senate President Sweeney and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of NJ's 21 county vocational-technical school districts. And thank you for your efforts to travel around the state to hear from local officials about the impact of school funding. The current flat funding situation is unsustainable, and we are encouraged by the Legislature's commitment to rebalancing the distribution of state aid based upon current enrollment.

The 21 county vocational-technical school districts have experienced an average enrollment increase of over 14% since 2009-10, and one-third of our districts have experienced enrollment growth of 20% or more.

- 20 of 21 counties have experienced an enrollment increase since 2009.
- 11 of those counties have experienced double-digit growth
- One district (Atlantic County Institute of Technology) has increased enrollment by over 150% through a conversion from part-time career programs to a full-time career and technical education high school.
- A similar transition is currently underway in Cumberland County, and it will be critical for the state aid formula to start recognizing those new full-time students.

Yet state aid has been essentially flat, with most county vocational schools receiving less aid this year than they did in 2009-10.

And unlike local school districts that have the ability to increase local support by 2% each year, county vocational schools do not have the authority to levy school taxes. They depend on their county freeholders to allocate funding each year and many vocational schools have received little or no increase in county tax levy support for the past seven years or longer.

- Eight county vocational districts have received flat or reduced county funding since 2009-10
- Six additional districts received a cumulative seven-year increase of only 5% or less – which amounts to under 1% per year of tax levy growth.

While all school districts are struggling to address rising costs, enrollment growth, and new requirements in an era of flat funding, county vocational schools face the added challenge of keeping career programs aligned with current and emerging workforce needs. This requires sufficient resources to attract talented teachers from industry, and to keep technical equipment

and curricula up to date with industry demands. We simply cannot prepare students for tomorrow's jobs if we are using outdated equipment and technology.

For example, here in Bergen County, the vocational school district recently added an aerospace program to capitalize on the location adjacent to Teterboro airport and help students develop STEM and design skills in a real-world context. Moving forward in this direction requires recruiting an engineering teacher from industry, and specialized equipment like a desktop wind tunnel to demonstrate lift and drag.

We recognize the complexity of restoring enrollment-driven funding, and respectfully urge this committee to consider the unique situation of county-based vocational-technical schools a little differently than local districts. In particular, we are concerned about the impact the elimination of adjustment aid would have on a small number of county vocational-technical school districts that would lose substantial funding under the Senate's proposal, despite growing enrollment.

Adjustment aid was a key component of the SFRA for county vocational schools as they transitioned from categorical aid for vocational, adult, and special education programs, to a wealth based formula that eliminated all support for adult education.

Unlike local districts, county vocational schools do not have a mechanism to replace state funding with other revenue sources. Relaxing the local tax levy cap would not help county vocational school districts, because their funding is determined by the county freeholders, not their board of education and school community.

The only other funding source available to county vocational school districts is a local district contribution in the form of tuition. Increasing tuition charged to sending school districts would put an additional strain on districts constrained by their own budget caps. And, shifting more of the cost for career and technical education to local school districts who send us their students would likely result in lower enrollment, at a time when students and employers alike are clamoring for more CTE opportunities.

Recognizing this unique situation, and the critical need for career-focused learning opportunities in our state, we respectfully ask you to avoid aid reductions for county vocational schools for next year. This will ensure that well-intended funding reallocations do not end up increasing tuition costs for local districts, potentially limiting opportunities for students, and ultimately reducing the pipeline of well-prepared workers that employers so desperately need.

For the longer term, the Legislature may want to consider allocating the career and technical education portion of SFRA funding through per pupil aid, rather than the current wealth-based weight. Consideration should also be given to restoring enrollment-based aid for adult vocational programs as part of the formula. Despite the Legislature's continued efforts to fund these programs through the budget, adult funding was cut again this year, and adult training opportunities will be in jeopardy if adjustment aid is eliminated.

Preserving these unique categorical aids was a recommendation¹ of the 2006 Special Session Joint Legislative Commission for Public School Funding Reform, but the SFRA legislation adopted a wealth-based approach instead. Revisiting this recommendation for secondary and adult vocational education would have limited cost impact, since it would affect only the small universe of county-based vocational districts.

Thank you for your commitment to moving back toward enrollment-driven funding, and for giving us the opportunity to speak today

¹ Special Session Joint Legislative Commission for Public School Funding Reform: "Recommendation 9: Continue the current funding method for adult and postsecondary education aid, county vocational school aid, and transportation aid, but update the cost factors to reflect inflation." November 15, 2006, p. 77.



PRE-K OUR WAY

Prepared for school, ready for success.

TESTIMONY
Pre-K Our Way
State Senate Select Committee on School Funding Fairness
February 14, 2017

My name is Sam Crane and I am here today representing Pre-K Our Way.

Pre-K Our Way is a nonprofit, nonpartisan effort that helps communities bring New Jersey's high-quality pre-k to their children. In less than two years, we've gathered more than 27,000 supporters, mobilized 50+ different advocate organizations representing hundreds of thousands of members – including last week's support from the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, and worked with a Leadership Group that includes former governors Kean and Florio.

Visit our website at www.prekourway.org for more information.

Personally, I commend the State Senate Select Committee on School Funding Fairness for tackling one of the thorniest issues that has bedeviled this state for more than 40 years.

This committee will no doubt hear from many about the financial and tax implications of the existing school aid formula. Others will speak to the legal and constitutional issues surrounding school financing. All are important. However, I want to spend a few minutes on the real reason a school aid formula exists: it is a statement of our commitment to equality, quality and improving educational outcomes. School funding says much about our goals – New Jersey's goals – for public education and the children it serves.

New Jersey's existing high-quality pre-k is a uniquely New Jersey success story, one we should all be proud of and celebrate. It is a program that leads the nation in quality and results. The shame is that it is available – and funded – for approximately 47,000 3- and 4-year-olds in only 35 districts.

These programs are viewed by numerous outside experts and researchers to be among the highest, if not the highest, quality pre-k programs in the country. NIEER, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the First Five Years Fund are just a few of the many organizations that cite real and lasting educational improvements that result from a high-quality pre-k program, and particularly from New Jersey's pre-k program.

A dramatic example of New Jersey's pre-k success in improving student and school performance is Woodbine, one of the 35 districts – and a non-Abbott district – currently receiving state funding for preschool for every 3- and 4-year-old in the community. In the past – and before New Jersey's state-funded pre-k, this district was a very low performing district. Families were choosing to take their children elsewhere.

Today, the performance level in Woodbine has risen significantly and families want their children to attend this school. The reason for the turnaround? Pre-k changed the student performance levels and academic standards in every grade.

PRE-K OUR WAY

Prepared for school, ready for success.

New Jersey's pre-k is so successful – and makes such a difference – that in 2008, the legislature and Governor recognized this success and included in the SFRA a provision to expand New Jersey's state-funded, full-day pre-k to children in virtually every district across the state. Today, this provision of the 2008 law would provide 50,000 additional 3- and 4-year-old children – every year – with the opportunity to access programs that prepare them for school and life. However, this expansion has never been funded.

There are families in each of your districts – children – that are waiting for access to this New Jersey success story: the state's existing program of high-quality pre-k. The members of this committee alone represent a total of nearly 8,500 of the 50,000 kids that are waiting each year for access to New Jersey's pre-k, promised to them in 2008. That's not right.

As we consider any formula, it is time to fund educational improvements – and time to build on pre-k's success for our state's future rather than to take steps backward. There is no more important educational investment we can have than to expand our state's existing successful, high-quality 3- and 4-year-old pre-k to more students across the state.

Yes, it costs money: \$550 million annually when fully implemented, but the return on this critical investment can be measured in academic improvements, higher graduation rates, current workforce satisfaction, better child health and lower special education costs. It can also be measured in other ways, via other reduced costs.

For example, an independent organization, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, estimates: "implementing pre-k expansion could save New Jersey an additional \$1.2 billion over the lifetime of children served."

Let me finish with a quote from two former governors, both members of Pre-K Our Way's Leadership Group, who support pre-k and pre-k expansion in New Jersey.

Governor Florio: "The investment we make today in the education of our youngest citizens will yield real results for both our children's and state's future. Assuring that our children enter school ready to learn should be our highest priority."

Governor Kean: "There are a few priority reforms we need to make to improve education in our state. One of our highest priorities should be the availability of quality pre-k programs for all of our children. These programs offer our best hope for future success in school and life."

Let's follow their advice and maintain New Jersey's investment in a proven success: pre-k for the existing 35 districts. In addition, implement the existing law that promised this high-quality pre-k program to another 50,000 3- and 4-year-old children every year and across virtually every other community funded as a key educational improvement in the school aid formula.

Thank you.



PRE-K OUR WAY

Prepared for school, ready for success.



IT'S TIME TO BRING PRE-K OUR WAY

Where a child lives shouldn't determine whether or not they have access to high-quality preschool. New Jersey has one of the best, most successful, high-quality public preschool programs in the country. In 2008, NJ law provided pre-k to fewer than 40 school districts, but promised to expand pre-k to more communities. 50,000 NJ kids are still waiting. That's not right! It's time to bring pre-k your way.

Expanding New Jersey's pre-k program has become a bipartisan priority among parents, communities and policymakers. As a nonprofit, nonpartisan effort, Pre-K Our Way is your way to bring preschool to your children and your community. It has everything you need to raise awareness, raise your voice and be heard. Pre-k expansion won't happen overnight, but it will happen if we continue to make it priority for our state leaders starting now, and continuing this year and into next—and beyond. Pre-K Our Way can help, and is your way to bring New Jersey's existing high-quality preschool to your children and your community. Let's work together to bring your children the pre-k they need to be prepared for school and ready for success.

WE NEED HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K IN OUR COMMUNITY

High-quality preschool is so important that New Jersey has an existing law to bring it to young children. Today, there are fewer than 40 school districts with state-funded pre-k for 3- and 4-year-olds. Under the law, the number should now be nearly 140 school districts. Our state's existing program for 3- and 4-year-olds should be in more New Jersey communities. It's up to us to change that. Together, we have a great opportunity to bring pre-k our way. NOW is the time for us to raise our voices. New Jersey has many challenges and important priorities—we want pre-k for our kids as one of those priorities.

MORE

NEW JERSEY'S PRE-K PROGRAM MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

Access to high-quality preschool is critically important for children. When it's available, those who get it do better in school; those who don't start behind and have trouble catching up. Children who experience one or two years of New Jersey's high-quality preschool demonstrate greater proficiencies in language arts and math in the 5th grade than those who didn't attend an early education program. In fact, children who attend New Jersey's pre-k programs achieve at a higher rate, with a 20-40% increase in elementary school test scores. They struggle less in school—they are 40% less likely to repeat a grade—and they overcome barriers to learning to the point where schools see a 31% drop in the need for expensive special education services.

YOU CAN BRING PRE-K YOUR WAY

New Jersey's successful and high-quality public preschool program is one of the best in the country. Why? Because the communities that have it are allowed to adapt the program to their individual local community needs. The existing law, as well as current discussion of expansion of pre-k in New Jersey, are clear and support local community choice. Your community chooses: Public pre-k can be implemented through public schools, community for-profit, nonprofit or faith-based providers, or private providers. New Jersey law supports what is called 'mixed-delivery'; a system of public supports and public and private implementation. Federal programs and laws also incentivize public and private service delivery.

TOGETHER WE CAN BRING PRE-K OUR WAY

No one is more important in this effort than you, your colleagues, family, friends and neighbors. Your input, involvement and voice is critical to sending the message that your community wants New Jersey's high-quality pre-k program to come your way. Here's what you can do:



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Like Pre-K Our Way on Facebook and follow @PreKOurWay on Twitter and sign up for email updates at www.prekourway.org.



BE HEARD

Write personal opinion letters or op-eds to your local news and media outlets. Examples can be found at www.prekourway.org/be-heard/.



TELL YOUR COLLEAGUES, FAMILY, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Show your support for New Jersey's high-quality pre-k on your social media pages—Facebook, Twitter, blogs. Wherever you're already talking to your friends, families and neighbors, make sure they know about this critical issue.



LET YOUR LEGISLATORS KNOW THAT YOU SUPPORT PRE-K EXPANSION

Email your legislators at prekourway.org/write-your-legislator/. Share your reasons for bringing pre-k to more communities as promised—50,000 NJ kids are waiting!



VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR CONTACT US

Learn more. Get involved. Sign up for updates. Download the tools you need to bring quality pre-k to our communities. Visit www.prekourway.org today. Email us at info@prekourway.org or call us at 609-246-0034 ext 2.



PRE-K OUR WAY

Prepared for school, ready for success.



HELP BRING PRE-K OUR WAY

Actually, it's time to bring pre-k your way. Expanding New Jersey's pre-k program has become a bipartisan priority among parents, communities and policymakers. Pre-K Our Way is a nonprofit, nonpartisan effort that helps communities bring New Jersey's high-quality pre-k to their children. We have everything you need to raise awareness, raise your voice and be heard. Pre-k expansion won't happen overnight, but it will happen if we continue to make it priority for our state leaders starting now, and continuing this year and into next—and beyond. Pre-K Our Way is your way to bring preschool to your children and your community. Let's work together to bring your children the pre-k they need to be prepared for school and ready for success.

WE NEED HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K IN OUR COMMUNITY

We all agree: high-quality preschool is essential for our children to be prepared for school and ready for success. New Jersey has one of the best, most successful and high-quality public preschool programs in the country. Pre-K Our Way is working with local communities—and you—to expand public pre-k programs to 3- and 4-year-olds throughout New Jersey—and to secure the funding to make that expansion a reality.

Together, we want the state's existing high-quality pre-k program—available in fewer than 40 communities—available to families who now choose between working a second job to pay for pre-k vs. being able to have access to state-funded programs available in other communities in NJ—just not in theirs. Where your children live shouldn't determine whether or not they have access to high-quality public pre-k.

"There are a few priority reforms we need to make to improve education in our state. One of our highest priorities should be the availability of a quality pre-k program for all of our children. These programs offer our best hope for future success in school and life."

TOM KEAN Former Governor of New Jersey

"The investment we make today in the education of our youngest citizens will yield real results for both our children's and state's future. Assuring that our children enter school ready to learn should be our highest priority."

JIM FLORIO Former Governor of New Jersey

MORE

PRE-K OUR WAY IS A NONPARTISAN COMMUNITY EFFORT

Pre-K Our Way is coordinated through a diverse group of local business leaders, foundations, early childhood educators, local leaders and elected officials who are determined to make sure each child gets a strong start in life through effective early childhood education. That's why Pre-K Our Way is championed by former Republican Governor Tom Kean and former Democratic Governor Jim Florio—and welcomes the support of anyone who wants to put children before politics.

NEW JERSEY'S PRE-K PROGRAM MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

Access to high-quality preschool is critically important for children in our community. When it's available, those who get it do better in school; those who don't start behind and have trouble catching up. Children who experience one or two years of New Jersey's high-quality preschool demonstrate greater proficiencies in language arts and math in the 5th grade than those who didn't attend an early education program. In fact, children who attend New Jersey's pre-k programs achieve at a higher rate, with a 20-40% increase in elementary school test scores. They struggle less in school—they are 40% less likely to repeat a grade—and they overcome barriers to learning to the point where schools see a 31% drop in the need for expensive special education services.

TOGETHER WE CAN BRING PRE-K OUR WAY

NOW is the time for us to raise our voices. New Jersey has many challenges and important priorities—we want pre-k for our kids as one of those priorities. Expansion won't happen overnight; it may take some time, but it will never happen unless we act. Your children won't get pre-k unless state leaders know you want it—and hear you loud and clear. We have a great opportunity to bring pre-k our way. NOW is our best chance to make sure pre-k comes our way. 50,000 NJ kids are still waiting—that's not right!



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

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FACT SHEET

1. PRE-K OUR WAY IS A NONPROFIT, NONPARTISAN EFFORT THAT HELPS COMMUNITIES BRING NEW JERSEY'S HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K TO THEIR CHILDREN.

- Pre-K Our Way wants to expand the quality preschool model for 3- to 4-year-olds that New Jersey already has—through a law that already exists—but has never been fully implemented.
- Pre-K Our Way is a community-based initiative to bring New Jersey's successful preschool program to more communities so more children are prepared for school and ready for success.
- Pre-K Our Way is not a school and is not connected with any school.
- Pre-K Our Way and New Jersey law support a mixed-delivery system of public supports and public/private implementation. Your community chooses: public pre-k can be implemented through public schools, community for-profit, nonprofit or faith-based providers, or private providers.
- Pre-K Our Way is your way to bring preschool to your children and your community.
- There are only 35 communities with NJ's state-funded, full-day pre-k. **If your community doesn't provide every item listed in the checklist that follows, then your community doesn't have NJ's state-funded, full-day pre-k for all 3- and 4-year-olds in a community.**

☒ Full-day

☒ State-funded

☒ Available to all 3- and 4-year-olds in the community

☒ No waiting list

☒ No fee to attend

2. PRE-K OUR WAY'S MISSION IS SIMPLE.

- Expand New Jersey's existing high-quality preschool to more 3- to 4-year-olds in more of our state's communities.
- Develop the public and political will to expand New Jersey's existing, high-quality pre-k program; fewer than 40 districts—out of more than 600—have New Jersey's existing high-quality public preschool program.
- Increase access and availability: where your children live shouldn't determine whether or not they have access to pre-k; other communities have it—it's time to bring pre-k to your community. In 2008, NJ law provided pre-k to fewer than 40 school districts, but promised to expand pre-k to more communities. 50,000 NJ kids are still waiting—that's not right!

MORE

3. PRE-K OUR WAY WILL DO THREE THINGS.

- Create opinion leaders and supporters—community residents, parents, other family members, early childhood education advocates and educators, media, business and community leaders—to spread the word about the importance of pre-k and the need to offer the program to more of our state's 3- to 4-year-old children in more communities.
- Educate the legislature on the value of pre-k programs in improving educational outcomes and the need to extend the program to more communities in the state.
- Support a local organizing effort that continues to raise the priority of pre-k expansion so that it is part of the 2017 Gubernatorial and legislative election discussions—and for pre-k expansion to be a priority in the signed 2018-2019 NJ State Budget.

4. PRE-K OUR WAY USES LOCAL OUTREACH TO SPREAD THE WORD, IDENTIFY KEY SUPPORTERS/ADVOCATES AND COMMUNICATE.

- As part of Pre-K Our Way's 2017 Campaign for Pre-K Expansion in NJ, we're using small group meetings at key points in the calendar to share previews, insight, information and plans focused on continuing to raise the priority of pre-k expansion as part of the 2017 gubernatorial and legislative discussions and debates. **We believe the time is NOW to lay the foundation for the first months—and first budget—of a new administration in Trenton in 2018.** 50,000 NJ kids are waiting.
- In 2016, Pre-K Our Way co-hosted local community meetings with 80+ local communities across New Jersey. Co-hosted with the support of many of our advocate organizations, including United Way or YMCA organizations in each community, the purpose of each local community meeting was to inform and energize attendees to help bring pre-k their way.
- In 2015, our three regional forums engaged attendees from more than 300 different New Jersey communities across all 21 counties. Attendees used more than 90 breakout sessions to create opportunities to strategize, build alliances and take action to make quality preschool available to children in New Jersey's communities through use of a central question, 'What can we do now to ensure that our children are ready for kindergarten?' and focused on how we can act and work together to expand New Jersey's existing high-quality pre-k to more 3- to 4-year-olds.
- Pre-K Our Way's meetings—including Community Communication, local community meetings and regional forums—include parents, neighbors, colleagues, family members, educators and administrators, education advocates, business people, interested citizens, elected officials and others—all committed to making quality preschool available in New Jersey's communities.

5. PRE-K OUR WAY NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT AND ACTION.

- Email your legislators to let them know that you support pre-k expansion. Write personal opinion letters or op-eds to local news outlets, and use social media (personal Facebook, Twitter, blogs, community forums, online commentary in professional or community publications) about the need to bring New Jersey's existing high-quality pre-k education to more 3- to 4-year-old children in our state.
- Stay informed about progress and upcoming activities; like Pre-K Our Way on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.



QUESTIONS? You may reach the Pre-K Our Way team at 609-246-0034, ext. 4 or toll free at 844-335-PREK (844-335-7735). You can also email us at info@prekourway.org.

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*Testimony Before the New Jersey Senate Select Committee on School Funding Fairness
February 14, 2017*

Good morning Chairman Senator Steven Sweeney and members of the committee. My name is Bernadette McCausland, Trustee of the Paramus Board of Education and a Vice President of Garden State Coalition of Schools. I am grateful to provide commentary on the effect of reduced funding for public school education. While I am here today to testify about my experience as a Paramus Board of Education trustee, I am not here to represent or speak for the Paramus Board of Education.

Paramus has proposed an efficient budget that increases the educational experience, provides security for student safety and repairs our aging facilities. At first glance, we appear to be in great financial shape, yet we struggle to keep below the state imposed 2% tax cap. The 2016 increase in our tax levy was 1.99% which funded 90.4% of our district's general fund budget and represents 54.4% of the total property tax bill. We are only able to absorb such a large share of the resident's tax burden because of our community's significant tax revenues from malls and other retailers. Communities without large commercial business zones struggle even more. One concern that we share with other communities is to protect the individual student's experience from any budget cuts.

When I ran for the Paramus Board of Education in 2009, I wanted to ensure that any cuts would come from outside the classroom. I was determined not to reduce any student's educational experience.

I have discovered that I was wrong to think that we could insulate student instruction from budget cuts. There are only so many places that we can cut before we begin to impact the classroom, and with state aid coming in at only 2.5%, I fear that we are at a tipping point. In 2009 our state aid was \$3,751,532 then in 2011 our state aid was reduced to less than \$10,000. We have never recovered from our aid plummeting. Years later we struggle to maintain our programs and class sizes. We maintain a list of programs to eliminate if aid is reduced.

After the nightmare cuts in state funding in 2011 our district eliminated entire tiers of administration. At that time, I felt that was a good decision because administrators had only limited contact with students and so these cuts should not be felt in the classroom. I was wrong. Having too few administrators impacts the students in ways I could never imagine.

Reducing administrators leaves fewer experts developing curriculum, observing instruction, and monitoring that there is a healthy school culture. In addition, there is a significant workload arising from the Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying or HIB law. The few administrators we have are stretched thin working to handle the constantly growing load of cases to be investigated.

We need administrators in the human resource department to help teachers understand the changing healthcare rules and to properly administer the employee contracts. These are

complex issues that schools struggle with because they do not have a consistent stream of revenue to hire administrators for human resources.

Individual supervisors of the different courses of study were eliminated and now we struggle to pull from the same small group of administrators to design curriculum to meet federal and state requirements. In many cases, we have needed to hire outside consultants to develop curriculum and to provide instructional support to our teachers in the classroom.

With the shortage of administrators, it has become more difficult to supervise, review and mentor teachers. The newest regulations of TEACH NJ require 2 long and 1 short formal observation and there are now two additional classroom walkthroughs required. Individual teacher Student Growth Objectives must be set and reviewed using one of the Achieve NJ approved evaluation systems to record teacher self-assessments including the review of artifact logs of relevant supporting classwork to ensure that our faculty is meeting their goals. In addition, at least one of the post observation conferences must be face to face between the administrator and the individual teacher and the summative evaluation conference will be face to face. Proper supervision takes care and time. Education is constantly evolving and we need additional administrators.

The lack of predictable state funding and extra ordinary aid payments creates volatile swings in revenue and spreads fear and concern over whether our saved surplus will be held against us in the calculation of future funding. I am asking for the legislature to provide consistent and equitable funding so that we can continue to provide our students with great schools.

Thank you again for your attention. I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.



Senate Select Education Committee
School Funding Testimony
February 14, 2017
Patrick Fletcher
River Dell Regional Schools Superintendent

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you again on this important matter. I testified before the Joint Committee on Public Schools on January 17, 2107 and the Assembly Education Committee on January 18, 2017 with my colleague Dr. Kennedy Greene. We submitted twenty-five pages of data that I will summarize today in the interest of time.

Background

In 2008, the New Jersey Legislature enacted a new school funding formula called the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA). The SFRA was thoroughly vetted by the judiciary and found to be constitutional.

The formula delivers extra funding to school districts based on the number of economically disadvantaged students, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities enrolled in the district.

The SFRA has never been fully funded. This chronic underfunding affects districts of all enrollment sizes, all income ranges, and all geographic regions. In short, every public school district in New Jersey is affected.

While it is true that total educational funding has increased, a large percentage of that aid is devoted to non-instructional expenses like pension payments, social security, and debt service, thus limiting direct aid to the classroom.

This underfunding forces unfair decisions at the local level to meet ever-increasing statutory and regulatory mandates.

These decisions combined with growing income disparities negatively impact students' readiness to learn. As a result, student achievement stagnates, with pockets of improvement dependent upon where a child lives.

Districts are forced to look for efficiencies in their budgets, which is a good thing. However, there is a limit to the ability to find those efficiencies.

In addition, state underfunding coupled with the 2% tax cap prevents districts from addressing increased costs due to wages, benefits, special education, etc.

After many years of underfunding, many districts have reached that limit and are forced to cannibalize existing programs.

In short, the cost curve is exceeding the revenue curve.

Solutions

While complex, the issue of school funding can be broken into smaller more manageable problems.

Problem One: Inequitable Distribution

Approximately \$600 million of existing funding is devoted to adjustment or hold harmless aid. These funds were carved out of the SFRA pot in 2009 to allow districts who would experience a decline in aid to adjust to the new formula.

Unfortunately, this aid continues to this day and has the result of overfunding some districts at the expense of others.

These funds should be carefully relocated over a phase-in period. This would not require one cent of additional revenue from the state.

Problem Two: Underfunding

As stated before, the SFRA, was legislatively derived and deemed constitutional by the judiciary.

It is underfunded by \$1 to \$1.4 billion in the current budget.

On an annual basis, the state calculates the amount of aid necessary to fund the special populations – special needs students, English Language Learners, economically disadvantaged children, and those who live remotely or travel hazardous routes to school.

The state should choose one of those categories per year over the next five years and phase in the aid to local districts. This would allow the state to identify additional revenue to support the expenses.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that this issue can be fairly addressed if we only put aside our differences and focus on the will to do so.

Thank you

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