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In Case You Missed It: “Proposed school funding formula is all about fairness”

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In Case You Missed It
“Proposed school funding formula is all about fairness”
 - Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi

Proposed school funding formula is all about fairness

Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi

The Record

The constitutional benchmark for New Jersey schools is a thorough and efficient education. That phrase has been thrown around conveniently in defense of a formula that is too expensive to fund, with results that scream failure. New Jersey needs a fair funding formula that fixes the problem, and Bergen County taxpayers need real property tax relief.

A few weeks ago, Governor Christie proposed a formula that would provide equal funding on a per-student basis. This proposal, called the Fairness Formula, is nearly identical to what I have introduced since 2012. The majority in the Legislature wants to continue with a failed system. What the governor and I have proposed would fix the problem.

Under the proposed formula, aid would be \$6,599 per pupil. No student would be regarded as worth more than another because they have a statistically smaller chance to be provided a thorough and efficient education, and an even lesser chance to graduate. The state has thrown billions of dollars at underperforming districts for years, and the situation hasn't improved. The time is now that we face reality and provide fair funding for every student in the state and stop strangling taxpayers to fund failure.

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This lopsided school funding formula is indefensible. Bergen and Passaic are paying sky-high property taxes to fund a school district on the opposite side of the state that can't graduate half of its students. What makes the students in Camden worth 60 times more than a student who goes to Pascack Valley or any other school district in Bergen or Passaic? The answer: court mandates on how the state should spend its money.

The state Supreme Court ruled in the Abbott v. Burke decisions that most money should be distributed to districts that have demonstrated an inability to provide educational excellence. The consequence has been diverting money from districts that pay through the nose for education to districts that don't, such as Bergen paying for Camden. Diverting these funds has resulted in higher property taxes for districts that want to maintain the educational excellence they have achieved. In some cases the towns with diverted funds have large retiree populations, robbing senior citizens of their savings and the value of their homes.

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Providing funding equally on a per-pupil basis would level the playing field and decrease property taxes across the state. Extra aid would be provided only to make sure we take care of our special education students, who need the extra help to get by. Three out of four school districts would see an increase in aid. That means three out of four school districts would see a reduction in property taxes, providing much-needed relief to residents across the state.

The current school funding formula has been a disaster that drives up property taxes and does nothing to help failing school districts reverse course. The new formula would provide fair funding. Opponents of the idea will holler that it is unconstitutional. If that is their only concern, I have sponsored a resolution since 2012 (ACR-35) amending the state constitution to provide a thorough and efficient education on a per-pupil basis. The current formula is an indefensible failure. If the constitution is the only concern, then adopt my resolution and the Fairness Formula.

Full article [HERE](#).

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