



BEACON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
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Beacon, New York 12508
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Dr. Matthew Landahl
Superintendent of Schools

February 24, 2023

Assemblymember Jonathan Jacobson
47 Grand Street
Newburgh, NY 12550

Dear Assemblymember Jacobson,

As school board members in your legislative district, we look forward to working together to secure appropriate funding for our schools.

There are critical education issues that need your attention as you prepare to negotiate the State Budget with Governor Hochul:

- We are very thankful that the Governor and Legislators have committed to fully funding Foundation Aid. This commitment has allowed our district and others in New York to add valuable programs for students, while bringing tax levies at or below the limit. Moving forward, it is imperative that the State addresses the Foundation Aid formula to ensure districts receive an annual increase (exclusive of expense-based aids) that reflects increased costs due to inflation and other economic factors.
- At the start of the 2022-23 school year, more than 726,000 students in nearly 2,000 schools across the state (including in Dutchess County) lost access to free school meals. Providing free meals for all students — regardless of income — reduces food insecurity, supports learning, improves mental and physical health, and bolsters educational and economic equity. It also removes the stigma students may feel when applying for or using the free and reduced lunch program. New York State must establish and fund a permanent, statewide free school meals program to ensure all students have the healthy food they need to learn and thrive.
- Currently, the State allocates a per-pupil amount for districts to run their Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program. This allocation is significantly lower than the actual per-pupil cost to educate a student. For example, the cost of educating a student in our district (not including transportation costs) is \$11,867. Meanwhile the state's per-pupil allocation for a UPK program in our district is \$5,400 for up to 96 students. Based on the District's per-pupil cost, educating 96 students would cost more than \$1 million. But the total amount allocated to our District from the State is \$508,631 for 96 students. The difference between the actual cost and the State allocation would have to be levied to taxpayers, which isn't feasible with a tax cap in place. Therefore, the State should either fully fund UPK and allow transportation expenses to be eligible for aid, or allow districts the flexibility to locally decide on how to use the State's apportionment to districts for a UPK program.
- Laws should be amended to give school districts more flexibility with reserve accounts. Examples of new reserves should include a tax stabilization reserve and a health insurance reserve. In addition, the

unappropriated fund balance cap of 4% should be increased at least four (4) percentage points.

- The State should repeal Education Law 3012-d dictating how schools evaluate teachers and principals. A more effective evaluation process would exist if it was able to be locally determined.
- The State should continue to fully fund all expense-based aid formulas.

If you require additional information or have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at boeheur@beaconk12.org to set up a meeting.

Sincerely,
Meredith Heuer, Board President
On behalf of the Beacon City School District Board of Education

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