

# CLARENCE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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March 8, 2017

The Honorable Michael Ranzenhofer

New York State Senate

118 State Street

LOB 609

Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Ranzanhofer,

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with school superintendents in your senatorial district on March 3, 2017. As a follow-up to that meeting, I wanted to provide you with a summary of our most pressing concerns.

First and foremost, our view is that the Governor's recommended increase in School Aid is inadequate and falls considerably short of what our school districts need to maintain current opportunities for students. The Executive Budget recommends increasing Foundation Aid by \$428 million while repealing seven pages of law setting out the formula enacted in 2007 following the final court ruling in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity litigation. The New York State Educational Conference Board estimates that schools need a \$1.5 billion increase in state aid, given a set of moderate assumptions about ongoing costs and the reality of a 1.26 percent property tax cap. We urge you to reject the Governor's repeal of the Foundation Aid formula and to fully fund the Foundation Aid before considering other School Aid expenditures proposed in the Executive Budget.

Our second concern regards opposition to the Executive budget provisions authorizing the director of the division of the budget (DOB) from reducing school aid and other appropriations if federal or other receipts fall short of projections. School districts rely on the enactment of a timely state budget that voters approve or reject in May for the following school year. We strongly oppose granting DOB the authority to unilaterally reduce enacted appropriations that offset a loss in receipts from the federal government or other revenue sources. We believe it is the legislature's constitutional responsibility to return in a special session and enact thoughtful reforms with the Governor should the state's finances need to stabilize.

Finally, we ask that you support the following legislation in this session:

- Reject Charter School expansion at the expense of public schools by opposing unfreezing Charter School tuition that reduces the total state aid available to school districts.
- Support authorization of school districts to establish a sub-fund of the Retirement Contribution Reserve Fund to offset mandated employer contributions to the NYS Teachers Retirement System.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our concerns and for your continued support of the Clarence Central School District. We know that you say no to many other constituency groups in order to say yes to School Aid increases and we appreciate that education remains your top priority in the state budget.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey M. Hicks, Ed.D.

Superintendent