

Those interested in writing to their representative may cut, paste and edit directly from the text provided below.

[YOUR FULL NAME

FULL ADDRESS]

[DATE: Month, Date, Year]

As an actively involved member of the Phelps-Clifton Springs (Midlakes) Central School District and member of your legislative district, I wanted to write you about my growing concern on the financial situation facing our District and urge you to support the full funding of our schools and oppose any cuts in aid.

Just look at the numbers. Our District currently projects a \$1,395,000 budget shortfall for the 2021-22 academic year based on funding projections and promises that previous reductions in state aid will be restored. State aid funds roughly 58% of the District's budget.

The shortfall, which is impacted by several factors, comes at a time when schools have been required to enact greater health and safety measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the Phelps-Clifton Springs CSD purchased personnel protective equipment and new sanitizing stations, hired additional staff to deep clean school facilities, and took many other measures to keep staff, students, and the community safe. Those additional measures are projected to cost the District nearly \$500,000 more in its current fiscal year.

Also, the District, at the urging of state and federal leaders, went into action last spring to support local families with free meals. These meals were vital to our school community to feed children and ensure that no one in our community went hungry as a result of the pandemic. From March to September, the Phelps-Clifton Springs CSD made and delivered approximately 140,000 meals to District families. The District should be applauded for these herculean efforts. Instead, it faces cuts and potential reductions in student supports based on current projects.

For example, a proposed increase in state and federal aid to school is not what it seems. The consolidation of 11 aid categories into a "Services Aid" category would cut funding to all schools by \$700 million. Also, the state budget proposes \$1.3 billion in cuts to schools from STAR property tax relief reimbursements. While federal aid is expected to plug some of the funding gap this year, what will happen to STAR reimbursements once federal aid is gone?

Furthermore, the New York State Council of School Superintendents reports that half of the state's districts would receive aid increases of 2.1% or less and that 70% of districts would have any federal stimulus aid offset by cuts in state support. This would force many districts to enact staff reductions, significantly raise taxes or both.

Under the current proposal, our District projects that state aid will remain flat for the 2021-2022 academic year. Combined with a budget shortfall, deep staffing cuts would need to be made to balance the District's budget. Also, flat or reduced aid would have a long-term impact on local property taxes and, more significantly, have the most serious of consequences on our children.

School funding and our children cannot be put in peril. As an active member of your legislative district, I urge you to fully support the Phelps-Clifton Springs CSD. The District has played an integral role in supporting our families, and I would expect you to return that support by approving measures to fully fund schools, stave off any staffing reductions, and urge you to support your constituency and my community. Do not take away needed and necessary state aid.

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME/SIGNATURE]