

Attachment A

REFORMING THE NEW YORK STATE SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA

In response to the increasingly dire financial situation in many of our rural school districts, we urge that a process be established to reform the School Funding Formula and incorporate a new formula in the 2015-2016 State Budget.

The School Funding Formula (SFF) flies in the face of the 1997 settlement of the Campaign for Social Equity designed to close the educational opportunity gap. The SFF is neither equitable nor sufficient to close the gap.

The SFF is not equitable.

The wealthiest 10% of all districts receives on average of \$1651 per student in total state aid while the poorest 10% receives an average of \$13,422, eight times that amount. However, according to the Combined Wealth Ratios (CWR), the wealthiest 10% of school districts is almost 14.5 times wealthier than the poorest 10%. Thus, to reach the same ratio of wealth to aid in order to determine equity, if the wealthiest 10% of school districts were to receive the current \$1651 per student and the poorest 10% of the school districts should receive about \$23,940 per student, then the wealthiest 10% of the districts should receive only \$926 per student.* State aid only exacerbates the problem as it is currently calculated on a base of funding inequity. Any percentage increase only exacerbates that inequity.

The SFF does not meet a criterion of sufficiency

Citizens in low CWR counties cannot pay the needed taxes to achieve equity. The only alternatives the districts have are to make additional cutbacks and/or dip into reserve funds. For several years, school districts have taken these steps. They cannot continue on this path and produce students educationally ready as employees and citizens.

Reports from the New York State Comptroller shows that six of the school districts in rural counties are under “Significant Stress;” nine are under “Moderate Stress;” 31 are under “Susceptible to Stress.” Since continuing under the current SFF exacerbates the inequity, we are clearly headed in a situation of increasing devastation for many of our schools and a tragic waste of human potential

We can do better. This is reversible.

We therefore request:

The development of legislation that provides equitable and sufficient Foundation Aid Funding to fulfill the moral and legal imperatives for all children in New York's public schools. This should include elimination of the GEA which is antithetical to this goal.

***Presentation by Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director, Statewide School Finance Consortium at Democratic Rural Conference Forum on Public Education,, Jan. 18, 2014, Syracuse, New York**

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