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# Pittsford Schools

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Thank you for taking the time to collect feedback about the education funding formula in New York State. We appreciate your willingness to incorporate feedback into your report.

I am writing to you on behalf of Pittsford Central School District. Our district is located in the suburbs of Rochester and is roughly 30 square miles that includes portions of the towns of Pittsford, Perinton, Penfield, Victor, Mendon and Brighton. We are very proud of our staff, students and families and consistently perform as one of the top school districts in the county, the state and the nation. The district's curriculum and programs are also considered among the best available in public schools anywhere. More than 1,150 employees including teachers, administrators, and support staff provide quality services for an enrollment of over 5,500 students in nine school buildings.

Since 2012, Pittsford CSD has patiently waited for its full share of foundation aid. Despite missing out on an estimated \$100 million or more in state foundation aid revenue in the period from 2012-2022, the district consistently performed well while balancing the challenges of the property tax cap. While we were especially grateful for the restoration of foundation aid during the past three years, it was shocking to only receive a little over a \$1,000 increase in foundation aid for the upcoming 2024-25 fiscal year.

Yes, the district acknowledges that federal money has helped to support school district finances during an unprecedented pandemic that spurred on a wave of significant student needs. However, without a predictable increase of foundation aid in the future, an entire generation of students will continue to be impacted by this event without additional support. Previously, school districts had the ability to raise taxes to offset the lack of state aid during challenging economic times. Now with the tax cap in place, this is nearly impossible. This is the first time in the foundation aid/tax cap era that schools have not been guaranteed an eventual increase in foundation aid and it couldn't occur at a worst time in history given inflationary pressure, student mental health needs and the community's ability to absorb paying more in property taxes. For years, our budget has been capped (via tax cap) and frozen (via state aid). Over time, this has caused a compounding negative consequence as we contend with inflation, costs of energy, cost of health care, staff shortages, competitive staff contracts, and the compression of minimum wage.

What school districts need is an accurate, predictable foundation aid formula that guarantees a minimum annual increase with additional funding based on inflation data. An updated study on what it costs to successfully educate a child in public school should

be completed. Updated census and poverty data should be used in the calculations. Consideration for adjustments to the formula should be based on the number of students with special needs, English language learners, students in poverty and the new challenge of students with increased mental health issues. Since these issues can be backed up with data, politicians, budget staffers and other state authorities should not have the latitude to manipulate the foundation aid formula on an annual basis. Each year Pittsford CSD receives an estimate of over \$1 million dollars for a preschool program that doesn't exist in the district. Why not allocate some of these funds to the district to be used to support some of these new challenges? The funds are in the budget but not used; this also needs to be fixed.

Inflation, stock market fluctuations and other world events will continue to impact New York State's finances. There will always be a need to educate our young people regardless of these outside factors. Public education is the single most important institution in our state. Pittsford CSD taxpayers pay their fair share to support an educational program that is high performing and generates results. It is time to have a consistent, predictable state aid formula from New York State that we can all support and be proud of. Thanks for your time and consideration. We hope this feedback is helpful.

Sincerely,

Michael Pero