



Greenwood Lake Union Free School District

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Ann Lierow

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Rockefeller Institute of Government
411 State Street
Albany, New York 12203

RE: Foundation Aid Study

Dear Foundation Aid Study Committee,

Please accept this on behalf of the Greenwood Lake Union Free School District as input into the Rockefeller Institute Foundation Aid Study.

I have worked in the District for twenty years and recall that when the Foundation Aid formula was first enacted in 2007, during the onset of the Great Recession, known at the time as the Fiscal Cliff, it was a significant milestone. However, now in 2024, it is crucial that our district can rely on funding that is both predictable and adequate to maintain the instructional programs mandated by the New York State Education Department.

The current formula relies on outdated and incomplete data. For instance, it uses the 2000 Census to measure student poverty rates, which fails to account for Universal Prekindergarten students and Special Needs students that have the ability to continue their education until their 22nd birthday. Additionally, the 2006 Regional Cost Index, which is intended to analyze labor market costs, inexplicably excludes occupations in the education field.

In further considering the methodology for calculating Foundation Aid the area that specifically affects Greenwood Lake is the Combined Wealth Factor. The current model is flawed and does not accurately reflect the wealth of the students attending our district. Greenwood Lake has significant property wealth due to the presence of an eight-mile lake, which is associated with second homes owned by individuals who live outside the region. It is not unusual for a lakefront home to sell for an average of \$1.2 million, inflating property values and increasing the Expected Minimum Local Contribution. In contrast, non-waterfront properties in this same community are valued significantly lower, at an average of approximately \$313,000, which better reflects the actual economic situation of many residents. In reality, the Selected Adjusted Gross Income per Total Wealth Foundation Pupil Unit, as identified in the 2023-2024 Foundation Aid Output Report, is \$206,216 for families in this community—well below the state average of \$342,400. This model artificially inflates property values and does not accurately represent or serve the needs of our community. I have included data from the past four years of property sales, highlighting the stark contrast between waterfront and non-waterfront properties, for your review.

Lastly, this year, the Governor announced the elimination of the Safe/Hold Harmless Provision. Greenwood Lake was potentially facing a \$1.8 million reduction over two years. The District quickly recognized that reducing spending by approximately \$900,000 per year would have a catastrophic impact on instructional programs. We respectfully request that, similar to the 2010 GAP Elimination Aid, any significant aid reductions be implemented on a manageable timeline, allowing districts ample time to prepare.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Sincerely,

Ann Lierow