

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo

Governor of the State of New York

State Capitol Building

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The Monroe County Superintendents, comprised of 19 public school districts in upstate Western New York, urges the immediate restoration of the GEA funds owed to public school districts. As of today, our collective Districts, their students and taxpayers have not received a cumulative total of \$413 million in aid that the law requires and NYS residents have paid in income taxes. We are receiving less in aid now compared to 2008. NYS currently boasts a multi-billion dollar surplus and we respectfully request that our schools are allocated what has been promised; it's your constitutional obligation.

Despite several of the allegations that our schools are failing, the data indicates the contrary. The 2015 Newsweek and US News & World Report "Best High Schools" lists include multiple Monroe County schools citing their overall distinction including excellence within the "at or above average" performance of low-income students. The average high school graduation rates for our 19 Monroe County School Districts (including RCSD) is 89.7%, significantly higher than the national graduation rate of 81%. This has been achieved while working with a combined poverty rate of 42%. Aside from the notion of not restoring the Gap Elimination Adjustment, we feel strongly that there are two additional items in your Executive budget proposal that will impede our continued success; both relating to the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR).

The proposed APPR changes to improve teacher and principal accountability by increasing test weighting to "50-50" in the summative evaluation calculation will not yield the results you are seeking. These assessments weren't designed as an evaluative tool for educators. The use of these assessments as a "value added" tool are not research based or proven to be an accurate reflection of a teacher's/principal's performance. For these reasons along with the poor implementation of Common Core Standards, we are asking that the Common Core assessments are de-coupled from the APPR. We have found that our families do support a more rigorous curriculum and increased accountability, but not through a flawed accountability system. This flawed system may lead to teachers teaching to the test with the unintended consequence of decreased student engagement and reduction of meaningful and relevant lessons. We worry that our public outcry regarding the now high stakes nature of these assessments will spark a significant number of test refusals and reinforce the notion to our teachers that their primary job is to cover material instead of teaching, inspiring and tending to the diverse needs of their students.

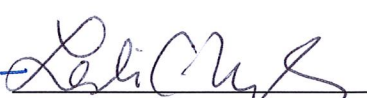
Last, the proposed idea of using outside evaluators to assess teachers (or principals) removes local control and authority of our districts, which is not instructionally sound. We find it unconscionable to use individuals who might not have the knowledge necessary to evaluate teachers and principals. Outside evaluators are unfamiliar with the curricular expectations, students and their respective needs, as well as with our community and systems/structures/practices in each district. Further, this expectation would constitute yet another unfunded mandate that will not enhance student learning outcomes.

In summary, please know that although we limited our comments, in no way are we in tacit agreement with other areas of your proposed budget. We are proud of our school districts and proud to be part of New York State's high quality public school system; recently ranked as 9th in the nation by Education Week's 2015 "Quality Counts" Report Card. Should you desire an opportunity to meet with our public school superintendents to discuss alternative funding options, APPR, ways to improve student learning experiences or the value of a free and appropriate education for all, please feel free to visit any of our schools. We are more than happy to talk with you to share the successes of our public school districts, our outstanding graduation rates and multiple accolades for academic achievement for the students we serve.

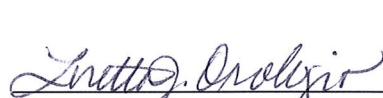
Respectfully,



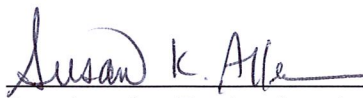
Superintendent Brighton



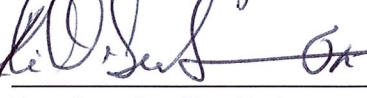
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Superintendent Churchville-Chili



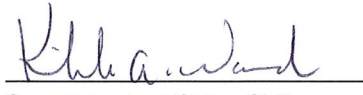
Superintendent East Irondequoit



Superintendent East Rochester



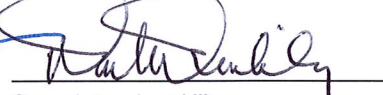
Superintendent Fairfield



Superintendent Gates Chili



Superintendent Greece



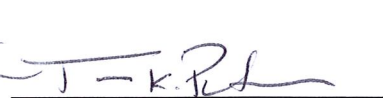
Superintendent Hilton



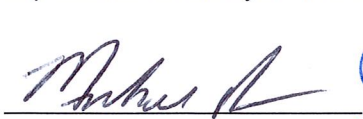
Superintendent Honeoye Falls-Lima



Superintendent Kendall



Superintendent Penfield



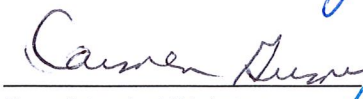
Superintendent Pittsford



Superintendent Rush-Henrietta



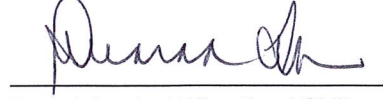
Superintendent Spencerport



Superintendent Webster



Superintendent West Irondequoit



Superintendent Wheatland-Chili