



# The State's Investment in Public Education

**Public Education continues to be a major economic driver for our local communities, our counties and the state. Without adequate funding to maintain quality public school districts for ALL our students, continued economic development across NYS will not be a sustainable goal.**

- Public school districts have two main sources of revenue; state aid and property tax levies. With the Tax Cap legislation, the State now controls both of those sources.
- Public school districts have significant cost drivers with mandates and pension contributions. These are also both controlled by the State.
- Public school districts face a growing need for resources to serve students who are homeless, live in poverty, are English Language Learners and have disabilities.

**School leaders have continually responded to concerns about local property taxes.**

- Prior to the tax cap, the 5 year average school property tax levy increase in Monroe County was 2.25%.
- Most public school districts have worked to remain within the tax cap in spite of decreases in funding due to the GEA, Foundation Aid freezes and the continue addition of costly mandates. Reserves have plummeted for many school districts during this time to make up for the funding gap. This has resulted in some of our schools meeting the fiscal stress measurement by the State Comptroller's office.
- Despite legislation that was approved to help school districts by allowing for PILOT growth and BOCES capital expenditures to be factored in the tax cap, no regulations were ever produced.
- The supermajority requirement has resulted in structural budget deficits and program cuts. It has also hampered the implementation of full day kindergarten which research shows improves student learning and closes achievement gaps. The supermajority overrides the will of the majority while inhibiting locally elected school board members to effectively govern.

**The Governor, the State Legislature, and the State Education Department must act to rebalance the equation of expectations on school districts with a realistic revenue stream and flexibility to allow for local decision making.**

- Foundation Aid needs to be fully functional recognizing that any change to rebalance the formula needs to have a comparable option for raising local revenue. Our school districts can't continue to be punished for their wealth aid ratios if they no longer can raise corresponding revenues to fill the state aid funding gap.
- Promised mandate relief has not materialized.
- The tax levy limit needs to be changed to allow school districts to comply with a 2% floor, or the CPI, *whichever is higher*. The tax levy limit, in its current form, has resulted in disruptions to long term budget planning, negative tax caps and community understanding.
- The supermajority must be eliminated so that, when necessary, a school district can ask for the community to override a tax levy limit without adding weight to dissenting voters' power.

**The New York State government has an obligation to support public education, and must explore every possible source of revenue to support this mandate.**