



Smithtown Central School District

26 New York Avenue, Smithtown, New York 11787

Mark Secaur, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
(631) 382-2006

January 29, 2024

The Honorable Kathleen Hochul
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

What a difference a year makes.

Just last year, you justifiably highlighted the fact you delivered on your promise to fully fund Foundation Aid for the first time in history. On your own [web page](#), you stated the following..."The past few years have been incredibly challenging for our students, and now we need to provide our communities with the resources they need to succeed," and "This budget takes transformative action to keep our children on track for success. Our students hold the key for New York's bright future, and our investment in education is making sure that future is brighter than ever."

With all due respect, what has changed? The financial stressors on school districts have only grown since your last budget, yet you are proposing an adjustment to the Inflation Factor and eliminating the "hold harmless" provision. This provision was meant to ensure that districts are provided levels of state funding commensurate with the previous year's allotment. This abrupt change in course will negatively impact districts' ability to plan for long-term fiscal stability, and will have a significant, adverse impact on their ability to meet the needs of the children we serve. Operating within the tax cap environment, districts have been tasked with meeting increased expectations in a fiscally responsible manner for some time now. We have accepted that challenge, but with the expiration of federal COVID funding set to take place at the conclusion of this school year, the timing of your proposal ignores the reality of the continued expenses that have been made necessary to address learning loss and the mental health challenges that were exacerbated by the pandemic. These concerns, coupled with the increased costs associated with big ticket items such as school security, technology, special education and transportation, make any loss of school funding severely problematic and will have far-reaching implications for students, staff and our entire education system.

With the above in mind, I respectfully ask that you reconsider your proposal and live up to your previously made promise to fully fund Foundation Aid and restore the "hold harmless" provision. In the interim, I will be actively engaging our locally elected representatives as well as the community to advocate on the district's behalf.

Thank you, in advance, for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Secaur, Ed. D.
Superintendent