

**Testimony from Andrea Katz, resident of Chesterfield Township (Burlington County) and Member of the Chesterfield Township Board of Education.**

Thank you Chairman and members of the Budget and Appropriations Committee for your time today. I am a mom of three children who are enrolled at Chesterfield Elementary School, and I have the privilege of sitting on the Chesterfield Board of Education. Chesterfield is a small town of approximately 8,000 residents, and our school district consists of one elementary school (K – 6<sup>th</sup>). **Based on percentages, our school district is the most underfunded district in the state.** Based on anticipated enrollment numbers for the 2016-2017 school year Chesterfield Township School District will only receive approximately 11% of the aid we should receive according to the SFRA Funding Formula.

In 2005, we had **295** students enrolled in CES. In 2010, we had **563** students. This year, we have over **750** students, and we anticipate an increase for next year. When a school has significant enrollment increases, flat aid equates to a cut in aid. Our growth has made our underfunding increasingly more dramatic over the years.

**Chesterfield is the second lowest per pupil spending district in Burlington County, spending \$15,974 per pupil, which is less than the State average, and we are paying the second highest taxes in the Burlington County. This is because we are receiving such a low percentage of our State Aid.**

Chesterfield's **adequacy budget** for the 2015-16 school year according to the State is **\$10,125,913**. Our operating budget is **\$8,814,999**. We are **\$1,310,914** **UNDER** adequacy.

Local Fair share for Chesterfield Township as determined by the SFRA is **\$7,252,333**. Our tax levy for the 2015-16 school year was **\$8,152,813**. For the 2015-16 school year, our local tax levy was **\$900,480** **OVER** what the State has determined to be fair. We anticipate having to raise taxes again this year to pay for increases in the operating budget due to the increase in enrollment.

Last year, we received **\$437,538** in State aid. The difference between our adequacy budget and local fair share as determined by the SFRA funding formula is **\$2,873,580**. **That makes is a difference of \$2,436,042 that we are not receiving in aid.** We will be getting an additional \$16,000 in aid for the 2016-17 school year, and while we are grateful for any increase it is only a drop in the bucket to make up for the amount we should be getting in State aid that we are not.

It is easy to chalk these funding gaps up to the fact that there is not a lot of money floating around the State right now. It is easy to say the State cannot afford to provide large amounts of aid to school districts. But, that is not the problem here. The situation I just described in Chesterfield is not the story throughout the State. There are some districts that are getting significantly more in aid than they should. **There 578 school districts in the state. 196 schools are receiving more than 100% of SFRA uncapped funding, and 259 schools are receiving more than 85% of SFRA uncapped funding.** This leaves more than half of the school districts in the State below the 85% mark of the current funding formula.

I took a look at two school districts in the 12<sup>th</sup> legislative district: Manalapan-Englishtown and Jackson School Districts. Both school districts are receiving **MORE** State aid than they should according to the SFRA Funding Formula.

Based on the funding formula, Manalapan-Englishtown School District received **\$12,620,834 MORE** in state than they should have for the 2015-2016 school year. Based on information from the user friendly budget on the District's website they have seen an increase in State aid of **\$145,700** over the past two years, and were able to **DECREASE** local taxes in 2015.

For the 2015-16 school year, the Jackson School District received **\$10,590,699 MORE** than they should have according to the funding formula. Unfortunately, Jackson did not have a budget on their website for me to look at; however, I was able to find a news article that paints a picture of their financial situation. The District is raising taxes in order to repave parking lots, sidewalks, and refinish gym floors. They are increasing their technology budget by 19 million to purchase smart boards and replace computer labs and tablets.

I mention these two districts not to single them out, but just to show how the disparity in school funding is significantly hurting the underfunded school districts throughout the State.

Meanwhile, in Chesterfield we are pinching pennies and making difficult financial decisions that we would not have to make if we were even close to properly funded by the State. Absorbing unexpected expenses is difficult when running on a tight budget the way we do each year. We have been trying to keep our property tax levy as reasonable as possible while running on an extremely tight budget and it is catching up with us. We need assistance and we are not asking for anything more than what the State of New Jersey has determined to be our fair share of aid.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

**School districts in each Committee Member's District that receive less than 85% of state funding**

**Committee Chair Senator Paul Sarlo- District 36**

Little Ferry Boro- 20%  
Ridgefield Park Twp- 30%  
North Arlington Boro- 32%  
Wallington Boro-34%  
Carlstadt-East Rutherford- 52%  
Cliffside Park Boro- 47%  
Lyndhurst Twp- 54%  
South Hackensack- 63%  
Wood-ridge Boro- 67%  
Ridgefield Boro- 73%  
Moonachie Boro- 76%

**Committee Vice Chairman Senator Brian Stack- District 33**

Union City- 82%

**Senator Peter Barnes- District 18**

Metuchen Boro- 50%  
Edison Twp- 58%  
South River Boro- 58%  
Highland Park Boro- 56%  
East Brunswick Twp- 74%

**Senator Jennifer Beck- District 11**

Red Bank Boro- 32%  
Freehold Boro- 42%  
West Long Branch- 54%  
Shrewsbury Boro- 55%  
Neptune City- 61%  
Colts Neck- 77%  
Interlaken-83%  
Long Branch City- 83%  
Red Bank Regional- 85%

**Senator Anthony Bucco**

Boonton Twp – 53%  
Boonton Town- 80%  
Chester Twp- 69%  
Denville Twp- 61%  
Dover Town- 62%  
Mendham Twp- 49%  
Mendham Boro- 44%  
Mount Arlington Boro- 82%  
Mountain Lakes Boro- 71%  
Netcong Boro- 50%  
Rockaway Boro- 51%  
Whharton Boro- 48%

**Senator Sandra Cunningham- District 31**

Bayonne City- 51%

**Senator Linda Greenstein- District 14**

Robbinsville- 28%  
Monroe Twp- 35%  
Cranbury Twp-49%  
East Windsor Regional- 52%  
Jamesburg- 53%  
West Windsor- Plainsboro- 61%

**Senator Kevin O'Toole- District 40**

Woodland Park- 24%  
Waldwick Boro- 38%  
Ridgewood Village- 39%  
Cedar Grove- 42%  
Totowa Boro- 42%  
Allendale Boro- 43%  
Wykoff Twp- 43%  
Wayne Twp- 47%  
Riverdale Boro- 48%  
Pompton Lakes- 55%  
Franklin Lakes Boro- 57%  
Midland Park Boro- 67%

**Senator Seven Oroho- District 24**

Newton Town- 56%  
Mount Olive Twp- 63%  
Green Twp- 74%  
Allamunchy Twp- 64%  
Oxford Twp- 80%  
Lenape Valley- 81%

**Senator Nellie Poe- District 35**

Elmwood Park- 16%  
Passaic Co Manchester Regional- 39%  
Haledon Boro- 53%  
North Haledon Boro- 54%  
Prospect Park Boro- 62%  
Garfield City- 83%  
Paterson City- 85%

**Senator Teresa Ruiz- District 29**

Belleville Twp – 51%  
Newark City- 85%

**Senator Samuel Thompson- District 12**

Chesterfield Twp- 11%  
Matawan- Aberdeen Regional- 72%  
North Hanover Twp- 76%  
Middlesex County Vocational- 80%

**Senator Jeff Van Drew- District 1**

Atlantic County Vocational- 26%  
Cumberland County Vocational- 70%  
Cumberland Regional- 74%  
West Wildwood- 79%  
Lawrence Twp- 80%