

March 2015

Senator James Seward
172 State Street Room 420, Capital
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Assemblyman Magee:

As a voter, taxpayer and resident of the Sherburne-Earlville Central School District, I urge you to support and fight for:

- The repeal of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) in the 2015-16 school year, and
- Use of the state's financial sanctions windfall to restore funds already taken by the GEA.

My school district has lost \$ 22,887,023 since the GEA began five years ago. Spending on materials, supplies, and equipment have been kept to bare bones. The district has increased its use of reserves by over 300% to mitigate cuts and save student programs. At some point, we'll run out of savings and places to cut and our students will be severely impacted.

The total aid taken by GEA from the Chenango County Association of School Boards districts tops \$482.9 million. During the past three years, our districts also have operated under the Tax Levy Cap, which is particularly toxic in our region of low and average wealth communities. In a high wealth region, a one or two percent levy can raise huge amounts of money. Our region doesn't have that kind of wealth, so the 1 or 2% raises only modest amounts, while still putting a greater financial burden on local property owners.

There would be far less reliance on local property taxes if the state were to pay its fair share and restore funding taken by the GEA. Our programs cannot be sustained and our mission cannot be accomplished without adequate resources.

The financial plight of school districts has not diminished; it is deeper than ever due to the state's systematic withdrawal of funding. Without resources, cuts must be made, which is why so many communities have seen school programs lost, ranging from remediation to summer school to guidance to buses. When programs are cut, people lose their jobs, which in turn, impacts the economy.

With NYS now operating on a surplus and a financial windfall now in its coffers, we call for an end to GEA in this budget year. We call on NYS to step up to its Constitutional and moral obligation to adequately fund education for the children in this state.

Sincerely,
