

Dear Senator O'Scanlon and Assemblywoman DiMaso,

As a Little Silver resident, I am writing to implore you to *continue to* assist us by advocating for Special Education Funding reform. I appreciate the work you have already done, but the political conversation must continue for *all* Little Silver students to realize the education they deserve.

I am aware that special education funding is a topic on both sides of the aisle. In terms of your commitment to the educational funding narrative, the State's fiscal year 2020 budget increased extraordinary special education funding by \$50 million. At the beginning of this school year, Little Silver received a total of about \$180,000, which was an increase of about \$55,000 from the prior year. While this increase is greatly appreciated, our total reimbursement is *about half* of the reimbursable amount. As you know, our district has a very low per pupil cost of about \$15,500. The formula only reimburses school districts for dollars spent that exceed \$40,000 for pupils in a public school placement and \$55,000 for students in a private placement. If a child is in a private placement that costs \$55,100 - then only the \$100 is eligible for reimbursement and the rate of reimbursement has been at about 50% (or \$50 in this scenario). Transportation costs can climb as high as \$60,000 per child per year and none of that expense is eligible for reimbursement.

In terms of reimbursable Extraordinary Aid, we implore you to:

- Continue to lobby for fully funding *Special Education Extraordinary Aid* for our children with the highest needs
- Lobby to include transportation, or some percentage of transportation, as part of the reimbursement formula

Under the School Funding Formula (as delineated in the School Funding Reform Act), we receive some funding for *Special Education Categorical Aid*. The Republican Caucus proposed *Every Child Counts*, which would make special education funding 100% categorical instead of the *current* 1/3 categorical and 2/3 wealth equalized breakdown. Senator O'Scanlon co-sponsored Senate bill [S3675](#) which speaks to that issue. PLEASE continue to lobby for this cause. The cost of a special education student in Little Silver should not cost more than a child with the same needs in a more impoverished town. Our per pupil cost is significantly lower than most towns with a lower SES (socio economic status) because they receive far more in State Aid.

Census-based funding continues to be a challenge. Under a census-based funding model all districts are funded for the same percentage of special education students. I am aware of the fact that Senator O'Scanlon is co-sponsoring bill [S3219](#) which would eliminate census-based funding. He is also co-sponsoring bill [S3676](#) which would implement a tier classification system for special education costs. We appreciate you lobbying on our behalf, but Little Silver needs more relief now!

We are aware of the fact that the State of New Jersey faces a fiscal crisis, but as special education needs increase, the unintended consequence to our local budget is to cut general education programming. Therefore, fair and equitable special education funding will benefit *all* Little Silver students.

In terms of State Aid, we implore you to:

- Make *Special Education Categorical Aid* 100% categorical by removing the wealth indicator AND fully fund *Special Education Categorical Aid*
- Eliminate census-based funding
- Continue to lobby for a tiered classification system for special education costs

Again, we appreciate your attention to these issues to date, but as class size continues to increase, time is running out! As Little Silver residents, we respectfully request you re-examine the special education funding process.

Sincerely,

Little Silver Parent