

*[Funding facts offered below. Feel free to customize. Remove all bracketed info before printing!]  
[Suggested emails and addresses follow the template verbiage]*

Dear New Jersey state leader:

*[Introduce yourself, identifying your role as a teacher, parent, student, etc.]* I represent [what group? Ex. 2200+ staff members, 14,500+ students, over 30,000 parents, more than 110,000 community members 76,000 of whom are registered voters...] in Toms River and its surrounding communities. Because of school funding cuts from Senate Bill S2, *[briefly state how this will impact you/your family/community]*. Ex. I may lose my job, I will see fewer educational opportunities, my property values will likely fall...]

While our leaders in Trenton assured us that the funding formula and Bill S2 would not create any “losers,” both are, in fact, being wielded to dismantle schools around the state. In 2019, we were forced to cut more than 68 certified staff positions and 55 assistant coaching positions; 2020 ushered in more funding losses and a global pandemic; and we recently discovered we will be losing an additional \$8.1 million in state aid in 2021-2022. Funding for supplies and extracurriculars is being reduced, and non-mandated programs are being considered for elimination. If state aid reductions continue as planned, they will total over \$100 million cumulatively over the life of S2. The impact will change not only our schools but our towns for generations to come.

Even before these drastic cuts, our district has had its challenges. Our county has one of the largest concentrations of opioid overdoses, foreclosures, and homelessness. (We also have the highest number of veterans in any NJ county.) Our low income population has doubled in the past decade and special education populations continue to rise, with related exorbitant costs. And we were the region hardest hit by Superstorm Sandy, from which we are still recovering financially and emotionally.

Toms River Regional Schools has a demonstrable track record of fiscal responsibility. We are among the most efficient school districts in the state when it comes to per-pupil and administrative costs, and we operate \$37 million under adequacy. Despite that, we have won awards for character-building, QSAC, financial reporting, Advanced Placement equity, full-day kindergarten, and other programs. We have aggressively and successfully pursued grants, sponsorships, and partnerships (which can only go so far). We are recognized leaders in STEAM, problem based learning, makerspaces, computer science for all, and social-emotional learning. Our staff share resources and run workshops for other districts and communities across the state and beyond.

The funding formula and S2 are pitting district against district and student against student. Worst of all, the formula is based on false numbers and miscalculations. Districts hide property wealth through PILOTs and by not re-evaluating property values for decades. Why are all of these factors not considered in state funding allocations? How about districts that spend far more per pupil with far less to show for it? Why punish districts for efficiency?

As a member of the NJ legislature, you have the power to do the right thing. You inherited a formula that even your own comptroller said was flawed from the beginning. By taking immediate action you will support all children in the state and prevent a legacy of irreparably harming real lives and communities. Please freeze all budget cuts for the coming school year so we can all survive to work this out another day. Toms River Regional staff and students, and the future of my community and its families, are in your hands.

Sincerely,

*Send to:*

*Governor Phil Murphy*

*Address: Officer of Governor Phil Murphy, The State House, PO Box 001, Trenton, NJ 08625*

*Email: [Constituent.relations@nj.gov](mailto:Constituent.relations@nj.gov)*

*Phone: 609-292-6000*

*Twitter: [@GovMurphy](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)*

*Sen. Steve Sweeney*

*Address: 935 Kings Highway, Suite 400, West Deptford, NJ 08086*

*Email: [sensweeney@njleg.org](mailto:sensweeney@njleg.org)*

*Phone: 856-251-9801*

*Twitter: [@NJSenatePres](https://twitter.com/NJSenatePres)*

*NJDOE Acting Commissioner Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D*

*Address: Office of Commissioner Repollet, PO Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625*

*Phone: 609-376-3500*

*Lt. Gov. Sheila Oliver*

*Address: Officer of Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, The State House, PO Box 001, Trenton, NJ 08625*

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*Assemblyman Craig Coughlin*

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