

SENATOR Jim

ASSEMBLYMAN Dave

ASSEMBLYMAN Greg

HOLZAPFEL, WOLFE & MCGUCKIN



NEWS RELEASE

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10th DISTRICT LEGISLATORS INTRODUCE BILL LIFTING VEIL OF SECRECY FROM SCHOOL FUNDING PROCESS

Also Oppose Effort by Democrats to Shift School Funding Burden to Property Taxpayers

Senator Jim Holzapfel and Assemblymen Greg McGuckin and Dave Wolfe have introduced a bill that would lift the veil from the State's secretive methods of determining school aid allocations. The bill, A-6029, requires the Department of Education to release to school districts the data and software program used to calculate aid allocations.

"Suburban school districts around the state, including Brick and Toms River, have been hit extremely hard by the school funding reforms imposed by Democrats last year that are having a devastating impact on our classrooms," said Holzapfel. "Those cuts are only going to get worse as the formula is phased in over the next few years. We've asked repeatedly to see how the Murphy Administration is making those aid calculations to no avail. Our legislation will force the State to be transparent with school districts about how aid allocations are determined and prevent abuses in the process."

A-6029 requires the Department of Education to provide any school district that requests the information, the data for all school districts used to calculate State school aid, including the data necessary to calculate all school districts' adequacy budgets, equalization aid, and local shares. Additionally, the DOE would be required to provide the details of any adjustments made when the calculated local share exceeds the adequacy budget for every such district in the State. The department would be required to provide the software program regardless of whether or not the department considers the software program to be proprietary.

"It appears that the Department of Education uses a 'secret formula' to determine what districts are 'rich' and no one at the department will clarify how those determinations are made in practice," continued McGuckin. "This legislation is our only option to force full transparency on the DOE to protect the interests of school districts and property taxpayers."

As some school districts grapple with reductions in State school aid under the provisions of S-2, the legislators said it is only fair that increased transparency is needed.

“At a recent Toms River school board meeting it was announced that after-school sports and extra-curricular programs would be cut throughout the district as early as next year,” Assemblyman Wolfe stated. “This is another devastating blow for students who look forward to and rely on these programs for the academic and social growth they would not otherwise receive after hours. This bill is necessary to gain the information school districts need to fight the deep cuts imposed on them.”

Additionally, the legislators announced their opposition to a proposal by Senate Democrats to lift the two-percent cap on school tax increases to compensate for the loss of state aid resulting from the passage of changes to the school funding formula last year under S-2. The legislators expressed their belief that lifting the cap is an attempt by Democrats to avoid addressing the real problems with school funding created by S-2.

“New Jersey has the highest property taxes in the nation and the only solution proposed by Democrats to compensate for the school funding cuts they imposed on us is to raise those taxes even higher,” added Holzapfel. “We’re still dealing with the devastating impact of ratable losses from Sandy on our local budgets. Ocean County property taxpayers can’t afford another hit on their tax bills.”

“Neither lifting the 2% tax cap nor implementing a millionaire’s tax as the Governor has suggested is the solution to the problems caused by S-2,” McGuckin concluded. “The way to solve this problem isn’t to raise taxes, it’s to fix the school funding formula and truly make funding fair for all school districts in New Jersey.”