

Honorable Douglas J. Steinhardt
127 Belvidere Ave., 2nd Floor
Washington, NJ 07882

RE: PROPOSED STATE AID CUT TO HIGH BRIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 14, 2023

Dear Senator Steinhardt,

I am a resident of High Bridge (District 23) and am writing to express my concern with Governor Murphy's proposed reduction of state aid to the High Bridge School District for the upcoming school year, 2023-2024. This letter is to draw your attention to drastic cuts in state aid and to ask for your advocacy in reallocating funds to the District before passing Governor Murphy's proposed budget.

The proposed cut in state aid of \$347,749 is on top of a drop in financial aid of \$310,000 for the current school year. Two consecutive years of state aid reductions, totaling \$657,749, leave both the High Bridge School District and the High Bridge tax payers vulnerable.

The proposed cut in aid has the potential to not only impact the quality of education in my school district, but it will increase my tax burden. Please consider these factors before passing Governor Murphy's proposed budget:

- **DISPROPORTIONATE SHARE OF FUNDING CUTS:**
 - High Bridge will absorb one of the greatest shares of aid reduction in Hunterdon County, accounting for over 41% of total County loss, and if the budget passes, will be the 7th highest percentage loss of state aid (32%) in the state.
- **UNFAIR STRAIN ON THE TOWN'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITY:**
 - For the past three school years, between 12-15% of District families are considered economically disadvantaged, a number significantly higher than the overall poverty rate in Hunterdon County. Yet, it is High Bridge School District's aid that is excessively cut.
- **INCREASED TAX BURDEN:**
 - High Bridge citizens will experience an increased burden on property taxes to alleviate the loss of state funding. The overall portion of local property taxes that supports the school budget may increase by approximately 14% due to the cuts.

The High Bridge School District prides itself in educating 355 children from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The District is recognized for the quality of its teaching staff and academics, social emotional learning programs, and special education services. However, these reductions intensify the pressure on all resources.

I look to you and your leadership to advocate that the High Bridge School District stops getting cuts to its critical state aid funding. Please consider these implications before passing a budget that hurts High Bridge students, families, and tax payers. I am confident that you will consider this matter with urgency and importance. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,