



*J. Kenyon Kummings, Superintendent
Wildwood Public Schools
4300 Pacific Avenue
Wildwood, New Jersey 08260
Phone: 609-522-4157 Fax: 609-523-8161*

Wildwood Public Schools

Dear Wildwood Public Schools Community Members:

I am writing you today to ensure that you are aware of our school district's position regarding state funding, having had nearly \$260,000 removed from our already approved 2018-2019 budget by the State of New Jersey. We received this news well into the summer and were forced to make last minute decisions in order to maintain resources and programs for our students. These changes to New Jersey's funding formula reduce our district's funding by approximately \$2.4 million over the course of the next 6 years. With a current budget of \$21.5 million dollars, this would represent over 10% of our total operating expenses. If these cuts continue, we will be forced to make dramatic budget cuts each and every year over the six-year term. As a result, our district will be severely crippled as we are forced to eliminate invaluable programs and supports that our students require and deserve.

Our district is unique in that we continuously have one of the highest percentages of students living below the poverty line in New Jersey (50%). We have a high special education population (24%) as well as a large number of English Language Learners (35%). Currently we have 40 homeless students enrolled in our district. We rent space for our early childhood program in order to educate 160 students who we are unable to house within the buildings we own. Yet, we are considered "Overfunded."

With that said, we continue to find innovative ways to address the needs of our students. We have afterschool programs that assist students from grades 1-12, a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) that enables us to feed all of our students breakfast and lunch at no cost to the parents or community, and many other programs that address the needs of our students. These important safety nets and programs coupled with our incredibly committed, qualified, and compassionate faculty lead to the continued success of our students.

For over two years we have been collectively advocating with other districts in the county in an attempt to maintain our funding levels. Cape May County school districts stand to lose approximately \$26 million over the course of seven years due to the modifications in the funding formula. The needs within our county are unique when compared with the rest of New Jersey. Our schools are vital safety nets to the students in our county especially given that Cape May County has:

- The highest unemployment rate in the state.
- A Median Household Income that is one of the lowest in the state.
- The highest percentage of Senior Citizen population in the state.
- The highest per capita substance abuse rates in the state.
- The highest percentage of homeless students in the state.

CHILDREN FIRST!!!

- The highest rate of child abuse/neglect in the state.
- The highest juvenile arrest rate in the state.
- The highest percentage of teens 16-19 not working and not in school.
- The highest percentage of Special Education Students in the state.
- Almost 50% of its students participating in the Free and Reduced lunch program.

However, Cape May County also:

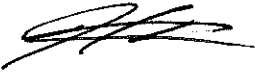
- Has the highest percentage of second home ownership in the state.
- Generates a total of state and local tax receipts of \$542 million or \$1.48 million per day.
- Has the most taxes generated by a New Jersey county on a per capita basis.

This year our collective advocacy has expanded beyond our county's borders. The districts in our county who are losing state aid have partnered with over 70 districts throughout the state in the SOS, or the "Save Our Students" group. We continue to meet with our Assemblymen and Senator regarding the damage state aid cuts are causing. Press releases giving an overview of SOS and its work have been sent to media outlets throughout the state. We are also planning to have as many community members as possible present in Trenton, NJ during Governor Murphy's budget address on March 5th, 2019.

At this point we need the help of everyone in our community to help us advocate for the state aid that our students desperately need. Please follow SOS on twitter (@NJ_SOS). Influential contacts are listed at the end of this letter. I urge you to call and express your support in stopping the state aid cuts until further study is done to ensure that we are not hurting one group of students in order to help another.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



J. Kenyon Kummings
Superintendent of Schools

Contact:

Governor Phil Murphy: Constituent.relations@nj.gov; (609) 292-6000

Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver: Constituent.relations@nj.gov; (609) 292-6000

Dr. Lamont Repollet, Acting Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Education:
(609) 376-3500

Assembly Speaker, Assemblyman Craig Coughlin: AsmCoughlin@njleg.org; (732) 855-7441

Senate President, Senator Steve Sweeney: SenSweeney@njleg.org; (856) 251-9801;
(856) 339-0808

Senator Bob Andrzejczak, District 1: SenAndrzejczak@njleg.org; (856) 696-7109 (Vineland,
(609) 465-0700 (Cape May Court House,) (856) 765-0891 (Millville)

Assemblyman Bruce Land, District 1: AsmLand@njleg.org; (609) 465-0700 (Cape May Court
House,) (856) 765-0891 (Millville,) (856) 696-7109 (Vineland)

Assemblyman Matthew Milam, District 1: AsmMilam@njleg.org; (609) 465-0700 (Cape May
Court House,) (856) 765-0891 (Millville,) (856) 696-7109 (Vineland)