

The Wayne-Finger Lakes Council of Chief School Officers appreciates this opportunity to share with you our concerns with our current system, while simultaneously offering solutions. I am here today representing the superintendents serving the 25 school districts in the Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES. We have read the testimony given by our colleagues across the state, and support all that has been offered.

As superintendents, we are dedicated to providing a quality education to our students that will enable them to be college and career ready. However, inequities in funding translate into lost opportunities for our students, thus decreasing their readiness for college and careers. Indeed, students from our component school districts do not enjoy the same opportunities and benefits that students in many other districts do. Unbelievably, the valedictorian of one of our schools was denied admission to SUNY Geneseo because the student's high school preparation didn't have the depth and breadth other schools in the state provide to their students. Half of our districts are not able to offer Advanced Placement classes, and only twenty percent offer the International Baccalaureate program to their students. Furthermore, gifted and talented programs are nearly non-existent in our schools. As has been proven by research, wealthy districts spend much of their funding on enrichment, while poorer schools spend their funds on remediation. This has a profound impact on producing talent, which will ultimately negatively impact the economic conditions of our region. We need a state aid formula that will allow student to have similar educational opportunities, no matter what their zip code is.

The following are suggestions that we feel could lead to increased opportunities for our students in rural high-needs districts:

The Gap Elimination Adjustment must be eliminated as quickly as possible. For more than half of the districts in our BOCES, it will take 58 years to fully restore foundation aid at the current rate of growth. Three future generations of students deserve better. The GEA has most negatively impacted the poorer districts in our state.

We believe our state can fulfill its promise to our young people by eliminating the funds allocated to performance grants, which are unproven and untested; by eliminating legislative bullet aid, which is doled for political purposes; and, eliminating high tax aid, which sends important resources primarily to districts of great wealth. All of these funds should be diverted to reduce the Gap Elimination Adjustment.

We also call for the creation of an equitable Foundation formula that will remove artificial multipliers that have been placed in the formula for political purposes. We need a formula that provides students with an education that prepares them for the 21st century regardless of their zip code.

Denise Dzikowski

Recognizing our changing world, it is imperative that all children have access to Universal Pre-Kindergarten. It is not Universal when students are selected by lottery to participate.

Districts would be better able to maximize their resources if the state were to remove the burden of outdated curricular mandates, such as the overlap in Family and Consumer Science, Health and Physical Education, and technology courses.

The benefit of students participating in rigorous coursework is well documented. We call upon the state to allow any student who successfully completes an Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate to be exempt from taking the corresponding Regents exam, regardless of what their score is on the test.

Finally, we strongly advocate a system whereby students are able to graduate from High School with not only a diploma, but also with an Associate's Degree. This would have a profound impact on the families in our region, while also ensuring a rigorous twelve grade year, which is not always the case.

Thank you for your time and attention to our needs. We are committed to providing a quality educational experience for the students we serve. We hold great hope and expectation for the work of this commission. Thank you for your service to the people of our state.