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Testimony

Hello, my name is Rebecca Del Rossi, and I am going into my junior year attending Canton Central School. Before the budget cuts, I considered myself lucky to go to Canton. We had many AP classes, a strong music program, and a multitude of sports, ranging from modified to JV and varsity levels. We had a significant amount of elective classes to choose from, as well as afterschool clubs that covered a variety of interests. Just a small selection of things that I have participated in are taking AP classes, Model United Nations, and school musicals; I'm president for the class of 2014, and I run cross country, indoor and outdoor track. Because of the budget cuts, each has been somewhat hindered or scaled back. And it is not just those particular programs that took a hit at my school. If we lived in a more suburban/urban community, kids would be able to participate in these activities outside of school, in community-based programs. But living in very rural northern New York, kids that had once participated in school-based programs that have been cut, no longer have an opportunity to continue on with those activities.

Having these opportunities is crucial to everyone in high school. It allows them to explore their interests, or will help them with life after school, whether it is getting into a college, going into the workforce, or joining the military. The path I see ahead for myself is to attend a college of my choice. The college admissions process is getting more and more competitive. Taking part in AP classes, clubs, music and sports is needed to set yourself apart from the general student body. When a college receives an application, they are looking for a well-rounded individual, not just an unfocused generic student who only had the basics of education given to them. The education cuts would produce more of the latter, and because colleges can only see an application, it would appear that the nondescript student was created out of lack of initiative, rather than a lack of educational opportunity. This is a very realistic problem for many. Cuts to electives and technical education have also hurt students who wish to pursue a career out of high school or further technical education.

Now, here is a difficulty that my teammates and I facing this year and the next. I am very passionate about running. Whether it is having practice, going to a meet, making great memories with my teammates, it is what gets me through each day feeling happy. My teammates and I have been incredibly successful these last few years, despite the relative smallness of our school. Because of our success, we have to go further and further out of the North Country to find competitive meets. What will happen if our school can't fund us to get transportation to these destinations? What will happen if our school does not have the budget to pay the admission fee, and some kids are not able to pay? Our team will not get the exposure or the experience to compete successfully at higher level meets, such as state championships. With budget cuts to

athletics, we will have less opportunity to be recruited by colleges and universities, if at all. This is especially difficult for me, because one of my dreams is to run for a Division 1 college.

With all of that said, the only way I can see to create a more stable and equal education system for all would be to go to the bottom of the problem, and change the state aid formula. Without changes to the system, the budget cuts will be even more devastating next year to students living in northern New York. The equation that we have in place right now is not working. It is opening a rift between people in poorer areas who receive what is considered a basic education, and those in wealthier areas who receive a much more rounded and challenging education. This needs to be fixed; a high quality education should be a right granted to everyone, no matter who you are or where you live.