



## KITTATINNY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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Good Morning Kittatinny Families,

I am reaching out for your help! Once again, for the 6th straight year, the New Jersey Department of Education and the Office of Governor Murphy have stripped essential NJ State Aid dollars from our district and our taxpayers. In the 2018 - 2019 budget year a plan was pushed by then Senator Sweeney to implement a funding formula established in 2008 for the 2018-2019 budget year, for all school districts across our state. This formula was and continues to be convoluted and impossible to decipher exactly how it works and the mechanism to distribute the almost \$10.75 billion dollars distributed to districts this budget year. A number of districts in New Jersey had to bring suit against the Department of Education to get them to release the formula to the schools so that it could be examined and understood in a more complete way. Once the case was disposed of and the districts were successful in winning the case, the NJ DOE/Governor Murphy had to release the formula and did so in a way and manner that after 9 months of review, the schools could still not understand how the money is fully allocated to schools across our state.

So here we are today, entering our 6th year of massive state aid cuts to our school district that have had significant negative impacts on our programs, our staff and more importantly our students. Some of these negative impacts have been addressed with one time funding (surplus funds or grants) or Federal grants (ESSER Stimulus Funding), but we have still lost approximately 20% of our staffing across the board through cuts and attrition (certificated, support, administration & co-curriculars) and this has resulted in some program changes, and eliminations. As a district we have experienced the most historic cuts in state aid and budget challenges in our 48 years as a school district.

There are some factors that are included in this loss of funding and one is our enrollment loss. In 2010 we enrolled 1150 students in grades 7-12. This year our enrollment is 784 students and overall in the last 13 years we have decreased by **31.8%** of our annual student enrollment. This is a large decrease, but not uncommon with many of our local county/area schools who have also experienced decreased student enrollment. Historically, school enrollment often has cycles and will have consecutive years of increased enrollment and years of decreased enrollment, but in most cases it does stabilize in the median or middle of the historical trends. In my 16 years as superintendent, our Board of Education and our administration has always developed "right sized" budgets and made sure to ask for what we needed from taxpayers, but not to over-tax or go to cap (4% or 2%), just because we could. We have not "padded" budget lines and have always attempted to be fair to our school and our students giving them what they need to have a

comprehensive and engaging school experience. Unfortunately, these appropriate and fair budgeting practices have come back to haunt us with these massive cuts in state aid. In the 2017-2018 budget year using our "user friendly budget" from the NJ DOE, Kittatinny received an adjusted \$6,126,372 in state aid funds to use for our student programs and to run our school district. Since the implementation of S2 and the 2008 funding formula, Kittatinny Regional S.D. has lost \$4,147,191 leaving us with \$1,979,181 for the 2023-2024 budget year. This is a 67.69% cut in state aid over the past 6 budget years. Please keep in mind our enrollment has decreased over this time at a rate of 31.8% since 2010 (not 2018). So...the reality is that the MASSIVE funding cuts to our schools and taxpayer community more than **DOUBLES** our enrollment loss in the last 13 years. Please know that we are trying everything possible and our efforts at KRHS to increase and open our School Choice Program have been successful, realizing an increase in state aid funding for this program in the amount of \$162,070 (this program allows students from across our county to come to KRHS and the state pays a portion of the tuition). This means our state aid cuts would be even deeper, if you could even imagine that, without this revenue program that the state has not properly funded since its inception.

So why do I write this letter to you as our Cougar Community...because we need your help. We need a grassroots push from our community and taxpayers to say **THIS HAS TO STOP!** Enough damage has been done to our schools and these cuts need to STOP! Every dollar Trenton cuts from our school district is a tax dollar taken away from our taxpayers. These cuts hit deep in our school community in spite of an increased \$1.66 billion dollars added to the NJ Budget for schools in the last 2 years.

#### KITTATINNY REGIONAL S.D. FACTS:

State Aid in the 2017-2018 Year - \$6,126,372

State Aid in the 2023-2024 Year - \$1,979,181 (67.69% decrease)

- Choice Aid has increased by \$162,070 since 2017 (31% increase by our efforts)

Enrollment 2010 - 1150 Students

Enrollment 2023 - 784 Students (31.8% decrease)

Kittatinny Regional School District Budget 2009 - 2010 was \$20,130,239

Kittatinny Regional School District Budget 2022 - 2023 was \$19,956,805 (the 2010 to 2023 C.P.I. Inflation Rate increased by approx 31.6% during this 13 year time period. Our 2009 - 2010 budget with no other fixed cost changes or increases (yes we have had enrollment drops) would be \$26,491,395 or 25% lower.

These budget numbers are clear indicators that we have been good stewards of our district and our budget. The State of New Jersey has failed to recognize our efforts to develop right sized fair budgets for our taxpayers and now we are paying a significant price by unwarranted State Aid cuts pushed upon our district by the politicians in Trenton!

**WHAT CAN WE DO?** I urge you to reach out to the Legislators to tell them that *"The S2 State Aid cuts are not commensurate with enrollment losses over the last 13 years and should be paused immediately in the face of increasing costs due to high inflation, a mental health crisis in*

*our schools, along with the short-sighted damaging results of the implementation of a formula developed 15 years ago."* Please add in anything else you see fit as you contact the local District 24 Legislative Office - Senator Oroho, Assemblyman Wirths & Space (973-300-0200), along with contacting Governor Murphy, NJ DOE Commissioner McMillen (973-376-3500), NJ Senate President Scutari, (732-827-7480), Assembly Speaker Coughlin, (732-855-7441), Senator Gopal, Education Chair, (732-695-3371), Assemblywoman Lampitt, Education Chair, (856-435-1247) and/or anyone else who might be ready to fight for our plight to get more Trenton tax dollars into our community! Please contact them through social media and by email if possible. We deserve some answers and some additional state aid to our local schools!

I will leave you with this chart which is always part of my budget presentations each year and it truly gives us all a clear picture of the continued and increased **LACK OF SUPPORT** from Trenton to the taxpayers of our community across all political lines! This trend is not fair to our community!

We are confident that our administration and staff will continue to do everything in our power to provide the students of our district with the education they deserve - despite the added challenges placed on us from the state.

I thank you for your time and I ask that if you have any questions please contact me at 973-383-1800 ext 1160 or at [chutches@krhs.net](mailto:chutches@krhs.net).

As always, I appreciate your time and effort to make some change in this devastating path to damage our local schools put forth by the NJ DOE and our legislators!

With Regrets,  
Craig M. Hutcheson, Ed.D.

	KRSD Taxpayer	Department of Education
• 2006-2007	54.11%	31.17%
• 2007-2008	56.77%	31.89%
• 2008-2009	58.96%	31.67%
• 2009-2010	58.34%	26.15%
• 2010-2011	61.23%	26.15%
• 2011-2012	64.34%	28.03%
• 2012-2013	64.19%	27.28%
• 2013-2014	63.29%	28.57%
• 2014-2015	63.31%	28.40%
• 2015-2016	60.12%	26.80%
• 2016-2017	62.06%	27.03%
• 2017-2018	62.80%	27.14%
• 2018-2019	64.10%	27.40%
• 2019-2020	67.01%	24.62%
• 2020-2021	70.00%	21.00%
• 2021-2022	75.44%	18.09%
• 2022-2023	78.53%	13.30%

We are projecting in 2023 - 2024 it will be less than 10% funding from NJ DOE & Trenton!