

March 4, 2014

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

All New Yorkers want to see the students in our state succeed in grade school, colleges and careers. As a concerned citizen and taxpayer, I know their success is an essential component to the livelihood of our state and local economy. Sadly, the continuation of the GEA is threatening that success. **I am writing now to ask that you work with legislators to eliminate the GEA during the 2014 legislative session.**

In 2009, the predecessor of the GEA was introduced during a time when the state couldn't honor its promise to adequately fund public school education. Now that the state has a budget surplus, it is time to eliminate the GEA. My local schools have already lost \$16 million in promised state aid, and that number grows to \$18.4 million under your 2014-15 executive budget proposal. The GEA has had a direct, negative impact on students because Queensbury schools have lost 85 staff positions since 2009-10, affecting programs and services at all grade levels as well as increasing class sizes.

The continuation of the GEA next year will mean additional job losses – as many as 12-15 teaching and support staff positions – which damages local education and the local economy. The cuts, which could be avoided through the restoration of GEA funds, partly reflect the rising cost of state-mandated expenses such as pension contributions and education reform initiatives. They also reflect the increasing pressure on school district revenue. For example, the true state aid increase for my local school district is projected to be only 1.37 percent, and the property tax levy cap is 1.45 percent (well below the oft-quoted “2 percent cap”). Added to that is the potential for a tax freeze that would force schools to not seek voters' approval to fund high-priority, but non-mandated programs.

Last summer, Queensbury Union Free School District ranked 13<sup>th</sup> highest for academics and 91<sup>st</sup> for taxes and spending (the lowest) among 91 Capital Region school districts (*2013 Business Review Schools Report*). Queensbury was also the recipient of two competitive state grants for 2012-15: the Performance Improvement Grant and the Management Efficiency Grant. Recently, you were quoted as saying, “It ain't about the money. It's about how you spend it – and the results.” I believe the results for my local schools speak for themselves.

Please help us maintain and build on those results by eliminating the GEA in the 2014-15 state budget. I appreciate your effort to expand educational opportunities, but before doing so, the state must first ensure that it fully and fairly funds K-12 education for our children.

Sincerely,