

Joint Letter
Leonia Public School District & Edgewater Public School
District

570 Grand Avenue, Leonia, New Jersey 07605 - 251 Undercliff Avenue, Edgewater New Jersey
07020

Leonia: (201) 302-5200 - Edgewater: (201)945-4706

BRYCE S. ROBINS, LEONIA BOARD PRESIDENT
THOMAS QUINTON, EDGEWATER BOARD PRESIDENT

April 9, 2020

Dear Senator Weinberg, Senator Sacco Assemblywoman Huttie, Assemblyman Johnson, Assemblyman Mejia, and Assemblywoman Jimenez,

The Edgewater Board of Education (EWBOE) and the Leonia Board of Education (LBOE) are submitting this letter as a joint appeal for the restitution of the spending growth limitation adjustment for significant increases in tuition costs and/or an adjustment to the state aid formula that recognizes significant increases in tuition costs.

The EWBOE student population sent to Leonia has grown by 37.4% since the end of the 2014 school year. These students are in Leonia's grades 7 through 12.

The EWBOE and LBOE have enjoyed a long standing sending/receiving relationship. That relationship has been governed by a tuition agreement that recognizes tuition rates per student based on LBOE's actual cost per student. Leonia's cost per student is in the lower third of the thirty-six Bergen County PR-K through 12 school districts. Tuition rates, therefore, are not a determining factor in tuition growth.

The tuition payments to private schools for the disabled, county special services, Leonia, and other public schools comprise 47.7% of the prospective EWBOE FY2021 budget. This is up from 38.5% just 2 years ago. The dollar increase over that same period is \$3,385,192. This increase has not been offset by tax levy and state aid increases. In fact, the growth in these revenues, combined, lag this increase by \$1,171,536.

In most public school budgets, salary and benefit costs are the largest cost drivers, by far, in their budget, usually between 65 to 80%. In EWBOE's case, the proposed 2020-2021 budget calls for salaries and benefits to be 31.9% of the general fund budget while, as stated earlier, tuitions are 47.7% of the general fund budget.

The rapid growth of this critical educational expense with no means to raise revenue to offset its impact on the budget has created an immense impact on the EWBOE budget and on its cash flow. The cash flow issue impacts LBOE significantly when tuition payments to LBOE are significantly delayed.

This appeal to the legislative team representing EWBOE and LBOE is made not only as a budget revenue issue but also as a reaction to EWBOE having to declare a fiscal deficit, having to receive an advance of state aid, and having to accept the appointment of a state monitor as a consequence of the deficit and state aid advance.

Sincerely,



X: _____

Bryce S. Robins
President
Leonida Board of Education



X: _____

Thomas Quinton Sr.
President
Edgewater Board of Education



X: _____

Edward Bertolini
Superintendent of Schools
Leonida Board of Education



X: _____

Kerry Postma
Superintendent of Schools
Edgewater Board of Education

CC: Senator C. Booker
Representative B. Pascrell
J. Tedesco, Bergen County Executive
L. Repollet NJDOE Commissioner
L. DeLisio, NJDOE Interim Bergen County Superintendent
A. Desimone, NJ State Monitor
J. Zeigler, Leonida Mayor
P. Fusco, Leonida Council President
M. Davis, Leonida Town Council
B. Flaim, Leonida Town Council
L. Grandelis, Leonida Town Council
J. Choi Terrell, Leonida Town Council
B Ziegler, Leonida Town Council
N. Wilds, Vice President Leonida Board of Education
M. Albanese, Leonida Board of Education
R. Weimer, Leonida Board of Education
A. Cassano, Leonida Board of Education

I. Park, Leonia Board of Education
M. Phelan, Leonia Board of Education
M. Thompson, Leonia Board of Education
T. Palecek, Leonia Business Administrator
L. Klein, Leonia Board of Education
M. McPartland, Edgewater Mayor
A. Bartolomeo, Edgewater Town Council
M. Henwood, Edgewater Town Council
D. Lawlor, Edgewater Town Council
D. Martin, Edgewater Town Council
J. Vidal, Edgewater Town Council
S. Greenspan, Edgewater Board of Education
S. Klein, Edgewater Board of Education
C. Ling, Edgewater Board of Education
C. Stefani-Rackow, Edgewater Board of Education
K. Marano, Interim Edgewater Business Administrator