

# BOARD OF EDUCATION

Administrative Office  
375 Bloomfield Avenue  
Nutley, New Jersey 07110

**John C. Sincaglia**  
Secretary - Business Administrator

Telephone  
201-661-3500

January 16, 1992

The Honorable John V. Kelly  
484 Bloomfield Avenue  
Suite 11, 2nd Floor  
Montclair, NJ 07042

Dear Assemblyman Kelly:

The members of the Nutley Board of Education have directed me to write to you to express their concern about the lack of State financial support for our school district.

Our school district has been told that it will receive State aid next year of approximately 5.9 million dollars. Of that amount, however, almost 3.4 million represents money paid at the State level for TPAF pension and Social Security costs. The remaining aid, about 2.5 million dollars, the amount that is used to support our local school budget, is at its lowest level since the 1985-86 school year.

The State share of our budget has been on a steady decline since the 1986-87 school year. That year we received State aid (excluding non-public aid) that supported about 15% of our current expense budget. Each year since, that percentage has declined to a level for 1992-93 that is approximately 9%. In actual dollars we have averaged a decline of nearly 5% a year since the 1989-90 school year.

Our school district has one of the lowest costs per pupil in the county, region or state. In 1989-90, for example, we spent \$5,731 to educate each pupil according to the New Jersey School Boards Association's Cost-of-Education Index. By contrast, the average district in New Jersey spent \$6,348 per pupil - \$617 more than Nutley. The average Essex County district spent over \$900 more per pupil than Nutley. We have demonstrated time and again our willingness and ability to provide a very sound educational program at a very reasonable cost.

The Nutley Board and the taxpayers, however, are dismayed that while we have these outstanding results, it seems that the State of New Jersey has become less and less willing to do its part.

When the original Quality Education Act was written, Nutley was considered a Foundation Aid district, and we were led to believe that we might see at least small improvement in our State aid. Instead, however, we found, under QEA II, that Nutley had become a 96% Transition

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Aid district and would only receive State aid similar to what was received three years earlier (excluding TPAF aid).

This year's State aid figures (for 1992-93) are even worse. The small amount of Foundation Aid we were receiving is gone, and with the 25% cut in Transition Aid, our net loss is nearly a quarter of a million dollars.

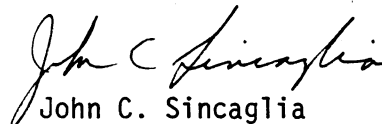
If Nutley had been a "Minimum Aid" district, we could have understood that we must lose some of our State aid as a result of the Abbott vs. Burke ruling of the New Jersey Supreme Court. We were not a Minimum Aid district, however, we essentially became one when the QEA was amended. For Nutley, the amendments were a small immediate problem, but a horrendous problem for the future.

We do not mean to infer that we supported the original QEA, nor are we suggesting a return to it, but for us, it was preferable to what now exists. When we consider the future loss of Transition Aid, the local assumption of TPAF pension and Social Security costs, the ever-increasing fixed costs that we must absorb, we worry a great deal about what kind of educational program we can continue to offer and at what price.

As the new legislature convenes, we ask that there be serious consideration given to towns such as Nutley that have been affected this way. We would ask that an appropriations measure for 1992-93, which would save harmless any district from aid reductions from the 1991-92 school year, be passed. We are seeking legislation that would provide State aid at no less than last year's level, except for enrollment declines, while the legislature deals with a long-term solution to the school funding issue. Secondly, we seek legislation that would keep TPAF pension and Social Security costs at the State level permanently. Such a law should be in place well before we begin planning the 1993-94 budget. Finally, we are looking to you to adopt an educational financial plan that is fair to all districts in the state while at the same time addressing the mandates of the New Jersey Supreme Court.

Obviously, this will be no simple task, but we want you to know that the current situation, which for us places a greater and greater reliance on local property taxes, is not something that holds promise for our students and community.

Sincerely yours,



John C. Sincaglia  
Secretary/Business Administrator

JCS:ls

c: Governor Florio  
Nutley Township Commissioners  
New Jersey School Boards Association  
Board of Education Members  
PTA Presidents

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The attached letter was also sent to the following:

Senator John Scott  
Senator John H. Ewing  
Senator Joseph A. Palaia  
Senator Donald T. DiFrancesco  
Senator John H. Dorsey  
Senator John H. Lynch  
Senator Robert E. Littell  
Senator Joseph Kyrillos, Jr.

Assemblyman Paul DiGaetano  
Assemblyman Joseph V. Doria, Jr.  
Assemblyman John Collins  
Assemblyman Rodney P. Frelinghuysen  
Assemblyman John A. Rocco  
Assemblyman Robert J. Martin  
Assemblyman Garabed Haytaian