



Greenwood Lake Union Free School District

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www.gwlufsd.org

Sarah E. Hadden
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Dear GWL Community,

We, the Greenwood Lake UFSD Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools, want to share information regarding three important state initiatives that are directly impacting our school district. Understanding each one, as well as the District's stance, may assist you as you decide about upcoming voting decisions and/or advocacy opportunities.

Governor's Proposal to Eliminate Hold Harmless for State Foundation Aid

Foundation Aid is the primary source of state funding for public schools. For many, many years, the State has allocated funds using a 'hold harmless' provision, meaning that no matter what changes a District experiences, it would never get less money than the year prior. Over the years, for many Districts, including Greenwood Lake, this has created a gap in what the Foundation Aid formula calculates vs what was received. Currently, GWLUFSD receives \$1.8 million more than the calculation accounts for. The Governor is proposing to eliminate the hold harmless provision, and cut funding over two years. For Greenwood Lake, this would mean a loss of \$900,000 next year and another \$900,000 the following year. There are two ways to respond if those cuts come to fruition: cut those funds from our budget, resulting in sweeping staffing and budget cuts OR make up for that difference within the tax levy to the community.

While the District understands the difference in the calculation vs what has been received, the State has followed this hold harmless provision for over forty years, and cutting 50% of the gap in one year would be devastating to all affected Districts (approximately 1/3 of Districts across the State). GWLUFSD is advocating for a longer runway, offering more of an opportunity to create a plan for the loss of funding. We would like to see a maximum percentage cut per year until the amount calculated equals the amount received. Absorbing this loss of funds over a 5-10 year period would be much better for the District as a whole.

Zero Emission School Bus Transition

A law was passed in the New York State Government, requiring that by 2027, all new bus purchases must be zero-emission (electric) ONLY and that ALL buses in operation are to be electric no later than 2035. There are no provisions made for geographical disparities, diverse weather or unique travel demands of Districts. Additionally, the cost to Districts for these buses are significantly more than their diesel-run counterparts. When all Districts are forced to buy electric buses at the same time, the laws of supply and demand will likely drive the prices even higher. Districts must also fund the studies needed to determine feasibility of the local electrical grid and bus storage areas, as well as pay for all the infrastructure (charging stations, stronger lifts, etc), driving up the cost even more. Additionally, there are safety concerns regarding electric vehicles, especially as it relates to vehicle fires and proximity to other buses when stored. Lastly, training our mechanics and staff in operating, maintaining, and fixing electric buses is both time consuming and has a cost associated with it. While the goal of clean energy is a good one, an initiative such as this must be done with common sense and in a realistic way that's reasonable and affordable for Districts.

Our stance is that there should be state funding to help meet these demands and that the goal should be a percentage of the total fleet, rather than 100%. Further, studies run and funded at the state level must be completed prior to implementation. These studies must include, but should not be limited to the following



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factors: the electric grid’s ability to handle this initiative, how the state’s roads will be affected by the electric buses, and each District's individual circumstances with geography, number and duration of bus runs.

Stop Arm Camera Legislation

In 2019, legislation was enacted that allowed municipalities to use cameras on the stop arms of school buses in order to capture images of individuals passing school buses illegally. Each county must initiate this program at the regional level. Orange County Government is just beginning its implementation; however the legislation allowing the police agencies to ticket individuals based on stop arm camera images ends in 2024. GWLUFSD strongly believes that the safety of our students is paramount, and as such fully supports this legislation and the extension of its timeline, without an end date.

We, as the Greenwood Lake Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools are asking for your support and advocacy on these initiatives. Please contact our local State Senator Skoufis and Assemblyman Karl Brabenec, as well as Governor Hochul with your opinions and ask for them to delay the elimination of hold harmless for state foundation aid, revamp the electric bus mandate, and extend the stop arm legislation indefinitely.

Assemblyman Brabenec	Senator Skoufis	Governor Hochul
brabeneck@nyassembly.gov 845-544-7551	skoufis@nysenate.gov 845-567-1270	Governor.ny.gov/contact 518-474-8390
28 North Main St Suite 2 Florida, NY 10921	45 Quaker Avenue Suites 202&207 Cornwall, NY 12518	NYS Capitol Building Albany, NY 12224

Thank you for your continued support,

Sarah Hadden, Superintendent of Schools
and the Greenwood Lake Board of Education:
Jon Thurber (President), Michele Kayser (Vice President)
Trustees David Clifford, Michael Emsworth, Patricia Kaminski, Ian Mahony, Aaron Nowak