



NEWS RELEASE

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NYS Council of School Superintendents Reacts to Final Report of Commission on Property Tax Relief

“Our position can be summed up very simply: A property tax cap would hurt schools. There are better options. The mandate relief recommendations of the Governor’s Commission on Property Tax Relief highlight some of those better options.

The strong state increases of recent years have helped school district leaders bring down local school tax increases. Statewide, tax increases proposed to voters last spring averaged 3.3 percent, down by almost half from two years ago. Local leaders were also helped by a stabilization of pension costs. Both these helpful trends have been hurt by the turmoil on Wall Street, with its damaging effects on state revenues and retirement system investments.

Combining tax caps with threatened state aid reductions would be destructive, cutting off schools’ access to both their major revenue sources at once. The effect would hurt the poorest districts most. Better-off districts could raise more revenue with the same percentage tax cap.

It makes more sense for the state to focus on helping school leaders restrain the costs that drive local tax increases. We commend the Commission’s intensive review of special education and support their recommendations to promote more aggressive use of BOCES (Boards of Cooperative Educational Services) and other forms of shared services between school systems and local governments.

We also endorse their recommendations to cut down on future mandates, by requiring more honest efforts to estimate their costs and requiring the State Comptroller to publish an annual accounting of all new mandates.

In some regions of the state, superintendents are strong supporters of school district consolidation. Foreseeing steep drops in local enrollment, they see consolidation as the best way for their communities to maintain viable school systems. But we oppose arbitrarily requiring all districts below a certain size to merge, as proposed by the Commission. Unique local factors sometimes make mergers impractical. Sometimes, transporting students would take too long and cost too much, for example.

We also support the development of a stronger circuit-breaker credit in the state personal income tax. It is the most efficient way to direct the most help to taxpayers who have the hardest time making their property tax payments.”

Thomas Rogers, Ed.D.
Executive Director

- 30 -

*The New York State Council of School Superintendents is the professional association
of more than 700 superintendents and other school district leaders.*