

Why Supporting our Schools Should Support the Taxpayer

By Senator Rosemary Brown

Educating our children is one of the most important responsibilities we have in state government and should not be taken lightly. This responsibility is a duty clearly defined in our state's constitution. Article III, Section 14 reads:

"The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth."

As your state senator, I have consistently advocated for strong state investments in our public schools. Over the years, the Commonwealth has made significant progress in increasing education funding, particularly through the Basic Education Funding (BEF) line item. This is the primary source of annual state support for our public schools. By increasing the state's share of funding, we help stabilize local school budgets and reduce the need for local resident funding and the need for school boards to raise property taxes. From the 2020-2021 budget through the 2026-2027 budget, we increased funding for K-12 public schools by \$5.1 billion, or 40.4 percent.

When school districts plan their budgets, they rely on three main sources: federal funds, state funds and local property taxes. Increasing the state's contribution is a tool I have to help remove the pressure off local taxpayers. That is why I have consistently advocated for fair and appropriate increases in Basic Education Funding dollars, so that local school boards can spend more time improving education and reducing your local tax burden, your property tax bill. However, how the school boards spend this money and the further decisions they make will determine how these funds are utilized to the best capacity.

It's no surprise to many of you that some residents in my district pay the highest school property taxes in the state. My office hears consistently from residents about this inflated burden, and I wholeheartedly agree! While the state does not set local school district tax rates, I believe the increased state investment, that I have supported, should be used to help offset these rates and relieve pressure on local families. You can find more information about individual school district spending, student enrollment trends, teaching staff numbers, special education, average yearly progress and more by visiting their website here.

Positive Local School Funding Trends

Below is a breakdown of the Basic Education Funding (BEF) increased state allocations for school districts in the 40th Senatorial District. This chart compares state support from ten years ago, five years ago, and today.

East Stroudsburg Area School District

2016: \$14,982,944
2021: \$18,273,860
2026: \$26,771,761

North Pocono School District

2016: \$8,496,461
2021: \$9,517,924
2026: \$11,142,316

Pleasant Valley School District

2016: \$22,269,473
2021: \$23,052,649
2026: \$26,731,338

Pocono Mountain School District

2016: \$26,847,312
2021: \$29,761,380
2026: \$37,498,240

Stroudsburg Area School District

2016: \$13,718,063
2021: \$15,879,729
2026: \$21,767,221



These figures demonstrate the continued upward trend in state funding and my commitment to fighting for our schools and taxpayers alike. As always, I will continue working to invest in the quality of education our students deserve while also pushing for smarter, fairer tax policy that supports families across our region. In the meantime, stay connected to your school boards and be sure they are spending productively and responsibly as this is where your school property tax bill is determined.

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