

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS

SENATOR, 35TH DISTRICT

**ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER FOR
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March 15, 2011

Honorable Dean Skelos, Majority Leader
Room 909
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Majority Leader Skelos:

This letter is a follow-up to today's debate on the Senate's Budget Resolution put forward by the Republican Conference, which, as I explained, disproportionately decreases the school allocation to the city of Yonkers in a number of ways.

As discussed, the Governor's budget reduced funding to Yonkers by 8% (\$17.5 million). That cut, if enacted, would cause a staff reduction of approximately 37%. The further deduction of VLT revenues as proposed by your resolution, would take away an additional \$15 million from the district which would devastate the school system. In addition, there is bullet aid directed to every one of the Big Four cities with the exception of Yonkers. While the Governor's proposed cut was second only to New York City and higher in percentage than every other district, this added cut makes it the largest percentage and the only double digit cut of the Big Five—a distinction that will undermine the district's success for decades.

In addition, you may recall, last year I sponsored two pieces of legislation that would have provided the Yonkers School District with much-needed funding in the amount of \$4.8 million for the district's Pre-Kindergarten program and an additional \$3.98 million to address the district's enrollment growth of approximately 1500 students. Although this legislation would only address a small portion of this year's proposed cut to Yonkers' schools, it recognizes the student increase and more appropriately meets the District's growing needs going forward.

While both these measures passed the Senate last year, the opposition centered around these issues not being part of budget negotiations. Therefore, I am requesting the restoration of the cuts to Yonkers, including the VLT money, and the consideration of these bills, designed to create more equity in Yonkers' school funding going forward.

I have always appreciated the special attention you've given to my district in the past. A great deal of your appearances centered around stating your desire to help Yonkers with its school aid formula in acknowledgement of the needs of a district that serves more than 26,000 children. I would appreciate your help now because the difference in funding is no less than the difference between a viable successful school district and one that fails all of us.

As always, thank you for your attention and consideration. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senator, 35th District

CC: Honorable John A. DeFrancisco
Honorable John J. Flanagan

ASC:kg