

From the Desk of  
**New York State Senator Marc Panepinto**  
District 60

**RELEASE: Senator Marc Panepinto Stands with 12 Regional Education Leaders and Teachers, Calls for Albany to Put Children First During Budget Negotiations**

*Panepinto: "Proud of progress made toward ending the devastating GEA but there is still much work to be done"*

**On FRIDAY, March 13th at 10:00 a.m.**, Senator Marc Panepinto stood alongside teachers, administrators, school board members and superintendents from Orchard Park, Hamburg, Ken-Ton, and Lake Shore School Districts in a critical push for public education. With 3 weeks left until the April 1<sup>st</sup> budget deadline, Senator Panepinto spoke on the recent senate budget resolution, the need for equity in school aid, an end to the devastating GEA, and a return to putting our children's future success at the forefront of education policy.

"The taxpayers, families, students, and teachers of Western New York schools need immediate relief from the devastating impact of the Gap Elimination Adjustment and an end to the disproportion in state aid funding," said Senator Marc Panepinto. "With municipalities already struggling to stay within the restrictive tax cap, the GEA is not just a social justice issue - it's an economic one as well. Eliminating it will undoubtedly lower property taxes across the board by injecting revenue into our school budgets that hasn't been there since the start of the recession. It is time Albany stops balancing their budgets on the backs of our children and middleclass."

Education officials and teachers also expressed the need to end the GEA and echoed Senator Panepinto's call to put our children first as budget negotiations intensify.

**James Prezpasiak, Superintendent of Lake Shore Central Schools (Evans/Brant):**

"The GEA has drained more than \$21 million from our educational programs over the last 5 years. Over reserve funds are at critical levels and the Governor is now holding our student's educational opportunities hostage with his political agenda," Superintendent Prezpasiak said. He later added, "The New York State Constitution outlines the educational standard of a free and appropriate education for all students. It is time to fully fund our children's future, stop the political manipulation, and end the GEA now. Senator Panepinto, thank you for all you are doing to end the GEA, giving our children the future they are entitled to and deserve."

**Matthew P. McGarrity, Superintendent of Orchard Park Schools:**

"The release of GEA funds to school districts would begin the process of allowing districts to maintain the quality programs and staff which have been decimated through aid reductions over the past 7 years. This decrease in state aid, along with the tax cap and unfunded mandates, has produced a perfect storm which has weakened the very fiber of public education."

Panepinto announced a major development at the end of the press conference but cautioned that there is still more work to be done.

“I have fought relentlessly for our public schools since taking office this past January and I am pleased to announce that there has been some progress,” Panepinto added. “Yesterday, the complete elimination of the GEA was included in the Senate budget resolution. While this is great news for our budget negotiations, there is far too much that has still been ignored. The Senate has yet to address increases in foundation education aid, the unconscionable funding gap between wealthy and poor school districts, or the troubling trend of irrationally targeting teachers as the scapegoats for education while completely avoiding the systemic broader issues at hand. So while I am proud of progress made toward ending the devastating GEA, there is clearly still much work to be done. With three 3 weeks left before the deadline, I am ready for the challenge.”

The following regional education leaders stood alongside Senator Panepinto:

- **Matt McGarrity - Orchard Park, Superintendent of Schools**
- **Dave Yoviene - Hamburg, BOE President**
- **Jill O'Malley - Ken-Ton, BOE Board Member**
- **James Przepasniak - Lake Shore (Evans-Brant), Superintendent**
- **Chris Cerrone - Springville, BOE Board Member/Hamburg, Teacher**
  
- Michele Amoia - Lake Shore Teacher/NYSUT Regional PAC Coordinator
- Bob McDonald - Lake Shore Retired Teacher/NYSUT Regional PAC Coordinator
- Kevin Schamberger - Lake Shore Teacher/VP Lake Shore Central TA
- Lee Widmer- Lake Shore Teacher/LS GEA Elimination Captain
- Chuck Kowalski - Lake Shore Teacher/LS GEA Elimination Captain
- Dyan Scritchfield - Lake Shore BOE/West Seneca Teacher
- Janet Utz - NYSUT ED 2 Director/Cheektowaga Retired Teacher

-30-

*Senator Panepinto represents the 60th Senate District, which includes parts of the City of Buffalo as well as communities in both the Northtowns and the Southtowns of Western New York.*

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