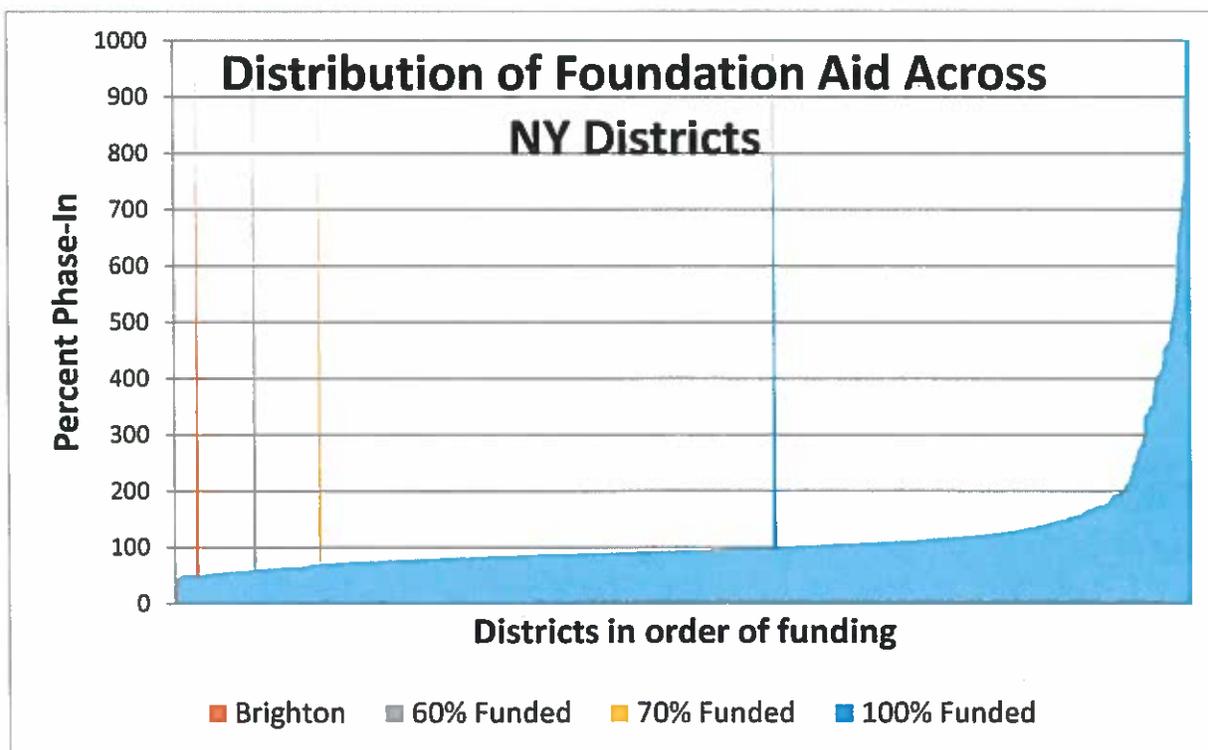




My name is Dr. Claire McLauchlin. I am here as a representative of **Fight for Brighton**, a community organization of 1270 families dedicated to achieving funding equity for the Brighton Central School District. Brighton, an inner-ring suburb of Rochester, is represented by Assemblywoman Jamie Romeo (136th Assembly District) and Senator Joseph Robach (56th Senate District). **Brighton receives only half the Foundation Aid it is due, and the district will have to eliminate virtually all non-mandated programs and offerings in its next budget without additional funding.**

The first year of the Foundation Aid formula, almost all districts in NY were made whole, their funding linked to measures of need. There were two districts, however, that were not allowed this correction – Brighton and Oswego. Because they had been severely underfunded *PRIOR* to the Formula’s rollout, the increase they were due appeared out of proportion to other districts. Based on this misperception, the State arbitrarily truncated Brighton and Oswego’s funding in that first year, saddling them with a long-term funding disadvantage.

In ensuing years, the State instituted even more caps, freezes, and other funding constraints, affecting many other districts but uniquely harming Brighton, which was impacted by the whole set. Right now, Brighton is just one of 54 districts, or 8% of the total, who receive less than 60% of the Foundation Aid they are due. There is no floor to protect them from falling further. Meanwhile, districts overfunded before the formula have been held harmless, and allowed to continue without loss. Currently, **40% of all districts are overfunded**, some receiving more than 10 times what they should.





Brighton's 50% phase-in percentage puts the district in the **bottom 2%** of all New York State districts, and the **second-lowest** in all of western and upstate New York. Over the last decade, its **measures of need have increased 36%**, but its funding is actually dropping. Brighton is still **without full-day K**, it just had a **failed budget vote**, and it relies on **property taxes to fund 70%** of its operating costs. This level of local taxpayer burden in a community whose wealth is dropping is unfair and unsustainable.

Now Brighton is faced with a fiscal cliff. Without a remedy this year, the district will be forced to terminate whole programs and dozens of positions. The most impacted students will be those with academic and emotional needs that are not legally mandated – students this district is proud to have found ways to effectively serve. Carefully crafted programs that raised high school graduation rates for ALL learners are about to be dismantled.

We are asking the Legislature to remedy its political manipulations of the Foundation Aid Formula. Brighton has been **underfunded by \$88M** since 2007 – money we will never recoup. Meanwhile, the many overfunded districts across the State will never receive less, no matter how low their enrollment or level of need drops. It is indefensible to allow a formula built to generate equitable funding to be so distorted beyond recognition that the amount it now gives to districts ranges from 41% to 1700%. It is against reason and frankly against your fiduciary duty to **HOLD HARMLESS FOR SOME** while **ACTIVELY HARMING OTHERS**. The Formula as conceived was fair, and should be allowed to **RUN**. Or at the **VERY** least – **mercifully provide a floor to protect the districts falling behind**.