

Good Afternoon. My name is Theresa Carlin and I have been the Superintendent of Schenevus Central School for almost one year. Schenevus is a small rural school, east of Oneonta. We are a single K-12 building housing about 330 students with a 95% white population. Both our property and income wealth continue to decline annually. Our free and reduced population is just under 50%. We have no ELL students and, our Special Education population is at almost 20%. Our current budget is just under 9 million dollars. A 1% increase in property taxes is equal to about 35,000, and unfortunately, we do not have to worry about the 4% limit on unassigned fund balance, because we have none, currently. Last year we were listed as number 3 on the Comptroller's most fiscally distressed NYS school list, and I believe this year we may be moving to number 1. Our biggest problem is trying to provide a quality education, after being underfunded in foundation aid, for the past 9 years, based on the original formula. This current budget year, we are underfunded almost 700,000. 700,000 would be equal to a 20% property tax increase for our community, each year. Over time, our district has lost some enrollment, but more importantly, we have lost wealth. We may have slightly less students, but those students are poorer than they were 5 years ago. The current formula is funded based on a per student amount, but it does not consider what our rural school, which sits in a community with no industry and increasing poverty, really needs to survive as a district. Last November it became clear, after using fund balance as a revenue source for the past 9 years to make up for the lack of foundation aid, that K-12 sustainability was short lived, and we would need to make some difficult decisions. We are currently investigating three options, a merger with a neighboring district, which is our first choice, but there is an added expense for a study as well as 6 different positive votes, 3 in each district. We could tuition out our 7-12 students to other districts, which is our second choice, but again, this takes time, bargaining and a community vote. Our last option, one that we do not want to happen, is completely dissolve our district K-12. If something does not change in the next year, with foundation aid funding, we will no longer be able to exist as an independent K-12 district. We cannot ask our taxpayers for the amount we need to stay alive, we have minimal reserves left, cash flow is an issue without utilizing a RAN, and since we had to significantly cut our educational program this year, to close a 750K deficit, we have very little left to cut. It is very difficult for a Superintendent to stand before you and attest to the fact that her district is not providing the best program and education possible for students to assure that they are college and career competitive and ready. I want to be able to provide my students with more than the mandated minimum of a basic regents diploma, yes I said basic as we can't continue to offer enough classes, in the future, to fulfill requirements for an advanced diploma. Thank you for your time and for realizing that correct funding of foundation aid needs to be your top priority in the 2020 state budget year and beyond.

I ask that you consider the damage that is being done to small rural districts that are not correctly funded. For us it is not about how many electives and AP courses we can offer, but for us it is about keeping our doors open with the most basic academic opportunities.