**Subject:** Investing in education and increasing state aid to schools

March 2025

Dear Legislator:

As an educator in the West Islip School District who has seen firsthand the impact a sound public education has on a child and knows what is necessary to provide that education, I urge you to support our schools and increase the overall state aid to West Islip Schools.

The West Islip School District has always prided itself on providing a high-quality education for students who attend our schools. This year, the district faces a budget shortfall of several million dollars, which will require staff reductions. Inflation rates of 4.7%, 8%, and 4.1% over the previous years have been a significant obstacle for schools across the island, particularly for us in West Islip. The NYS Tax Cap Law has restricted schools from raising tax revenue to meet these rising costs, leaving school districts dependent on state aid to offset the increases in inflation. This year, state aid to West Islip Schools was reduced by several hundred thousand dollars.

After surviving a threat to the ‘Save Harmless’ policy last year, we now face the perfect storm of high inflation, a restrictive tax cap law, and reduced overall state aid. This is an unsustainable formula for successful public schools.

The result of this situation is that services and staffing will be reduced for the upcoming school year. The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of human connection, especially in education. Staff cuts will negatively impact the students who rely on the relationships, services, and connections that make a school environment work. Strong bonds between students, teachers, counselors, and support staff, which are the key to achievement in the classroom, will only be weakened. In addition, opportunities will be lost for students who may make the next ‘breakthrough in a field’ or invent a new technology we ‘didn’t know we needed.’

Education is an investment in the future of our children, as well as in the future of our society and our nation. Please support increasing state aid to offset the inflation the West Islip School District has faced and bring this issue to your conference.

Thank you for considering this important matter.