

Dear Legislature

Please stop using our children's school aid to balance (and now produce a surplus in) the New York State Budget. **Release the school aid runs, restore foundation aid and do away with the GEA today!**

I am writing to respectfully request that you make a commitment to New York's children and schools today by restoring the funds for public education that are withheld each year as a result of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA), frozen foundation aid and refusal to release school aid runs.

The Minerva Central School District (MCS) has already lost nearly **\$850,000** (as much as \$267,000 in a single year) as a result of the GEA in order for New York State to balance its budget. This year alone, NYS owes MCS students **\$89,614**. We have already made difficult choices that have negatively affected our students. Our district has worked tirelessly to try to balance our budget and make up for the loss of state funding. Further complicating our financial issue is the current property tax cap, which for us doesn't result in enough funding to cover the annual increases in health insurance costs alone. The only way left to balance the budget is by cutting programs and staff. Our school district is running out of time and options; we can't ask the community to pay higher taxes, and we can't continue to cut programs for our students.

This school year MCS is operating on a contingency budget due to your supermajority policy. The MCS budget was supported by 59% of the voters in our community, a clear majority. 59% percent of the voters clearly stated that they support their community school, and they were told their votes did not count as much as the *no* votes.

Budget cuts have affected our school in many ways. We have seen the elimination of distance learning courses, band, and the middle school program as well as the school principal position. There have been reductions in physical education, technology, music, social studies, library services, reading services, elective classes and, academic intervention services. Elementary classes have been combined. and staff positions at all levels and in all areas have been reduced or eliminated.

Our school district has done its part, now it's time for you to do yours. This will remain a major voting issue for my family. My family, the Minerva community, and communities across New York State are counting on you to end the Gap Elimination Adjustment and fund public education properly.

Sincerely,