

Dear Senator/Representative _____:

As a taxpayer, I am concerned with the lack of financial support to our public schools. I understand that the Governor's budget proposal reduces learning opportunities for students in Pennsylvania and shifts more school funding responsibility from the state to local taxpayers. It is a budget that continues to reduce the state's obligation to provide sufficient resources to provide quality educational programs to children in Shamokin and throughout Pennsylvania. Specifically, I am concerned with the following:

The Shamokin Area School District is scheduled to receive an additional \$378,000 more from the state for the 2012-2013 school year after enduring more than a 1,725,295 dollars in reduced revenue from the state in the 2011-2012 school year. The loss of state revenue coupled with the alarming mandated increase in the state retirement contribution rate for the next school year has created a large deficit in our district budget.

The elimination of the formulas used to provide state support for public education by collapsing Basic Education Funding, Pupil Transportation, Nonpublic and Charter School Pupil Transportation, and School Employees' Social Security into one line item known as the Student Achievement Education Block Grant will prove to be a loss for our students. These funds have provided much needed funding for school districts and this is not the time for the state to end its formula-driven process to offset the increasing cost of providing transportation for students.

The Accountability Block Grant should be restored to its 2009-2010 year level. Shamokin Area used this program to fund full-day kindergarten and provide resources for our at-risk early childhood student population. Our socio-economic demographics for our school district and region predetermine that our student population is entering the public school system at a disadvantage compared to state wide averages. Our students are challenged academically to a greater extent due to the low-income socio-economic factors that are part of our community. Loss of funding will force us to eventually curtail and cut programs and this action will cause our at-risk students to be at an even greater risk in gaining success in academics.

The cost of cyber-charter schools is creating an undue burden on our local taxpayers. Shamokin will transfer more than \$1, 200,000 to various cyber-charter schools for the current academic year with no reimbursement from the state. The local taxpayers who have no oversight of these schools pay most of this cost. The state had been reimbursing school districts up to 30 percent of the tuition cost for students attending charter schools until this year. This needs to be reinstated immediately and the entire cyber-charter school funding issue needs to be reviewed and changed to accurately reflect the true cost of instruction.

For the fifth consecutive year, the special education subsidy would be level funded. Once again, local taxpayers would be required to pay for all increased special education program costs. This is a federally mandated program that should be funded by federal and state dollars, not local dollars. Local real estate taxes should not be used to support

special education programs that are required by federal law and of extreme importance to our children.

Finally, the state must take immediate action to address the retirement system crisis. The local taxpayers of Shamokin should not have to incur the burden of fixing a problem that was caused by poor management by the state over the past decade. Furthermore, our children should not have to suffer losses in their educational programs because of this issue.

I ask that you weigh your budget decisions thoroughly and place a greater emphasis on educating our children. It is a strategic error for the state to limit funding for public education, as it is more important than ever to ensure all of our students are ready and capable to succeed in our highly competitive global society.

Sincerely,