

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

What's on the Horizon?

<p><u>Changes to State Aid?</u> Building Aid? Transportation Aid? BOCES Aid? Other Aids?</p>	<p><u>Educationally?</u> Better results? Worse results? Less offerings? Cuts? Sound Basic Education?</p>	<p><u>The Federal Government?</u> More Stimulus?</p>
<p><u>The Comptroller</u> Audits/ Opinions? The Tax Cap?</p>	<p><u>Politically?</u> Stalemate? Cacophony?</p>	<p><u>The Federal Government?</u> Will this be an excuse for the state to do nothing??</p>
<p><u>State Education Department?</u> Support for a more helpful State Aid Plan? Mandate Relief?</p>	<p><u>Economically?</u> Structural Deficits? Loss of Public Support? (Tax Cap) Can a district go broke?</p>	<p><u>The State Government?</u> Will the state tweak a formula and declare success?</p>
<p><u>The Legislature & Governor?</u> Rhetoric or Helpful Action</p>		

Courts have established that the state has a constitutional responsibility to ensure that each district has enough money to provide a “sound, basic education.”

But nothing requires an equal education for New York children.

Paul Riede /The Syracuse Post-Standard/March 6, 2011

[http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2011/03/upstate
ny_schools_bear_the_br.html](http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2011/03/upstate_ny_schools_bear_the_br.html)

NYS Constitution

On November 20, 2006, [the Court of Appeals handed down its decision](#). The Court affirmed that the state's constitution requires that every public school child in the State of New York has a right to a "sound basic education" defined as "a meaningful high school education"

<http://www.cfequity.org/static.php?page=historyoflawsuit&category=resources>

Defining a “sound basic education”

- The foundational skills that students need to become productive citizens capable of civic engagement and sustaining competitive employment.
- Timeless, must be able to change as the needs and demands of our society change

CFE Volume 3 January 2001 “Special Report, The Trial Court’s Decision”

Adequate resources for a “sound basic education”

- Inputs

- Sufficient number of qualified personnel - teacher quality directly affects student achievement
- Appropriate class sizes
- Adequate and accessible school buildings with sufficient space to ensure appropriate class size and implementation of a sound curriculum
- Sufficient and up-to-date books, supplies, libraries, educational technology and laboratories
- Suitable curricula, including an expanded platform of programs to help at risk students by giving them “more time on task”.
- Adequate resources for students with extraordinary needs.
- A safe orderly environment.

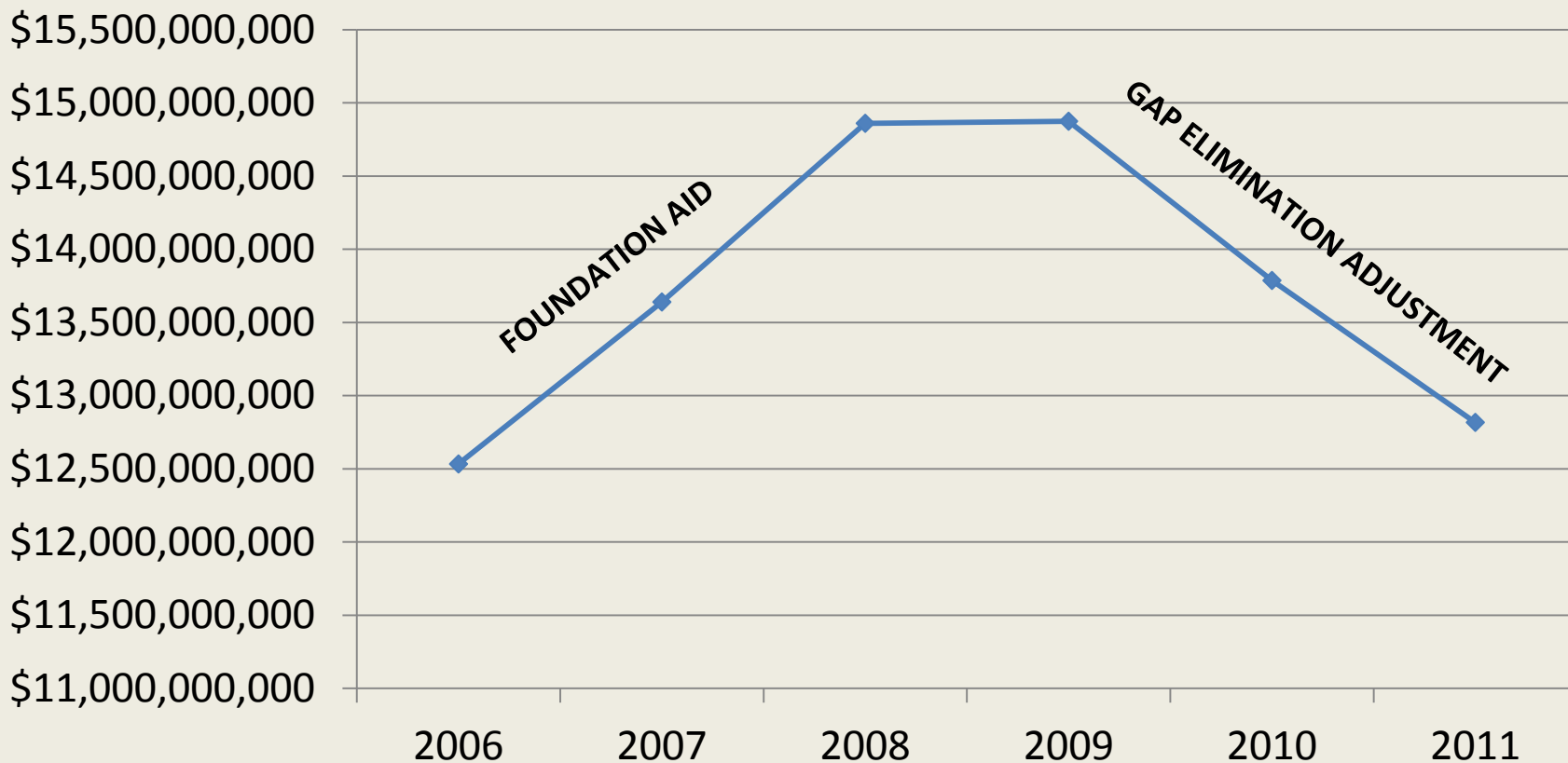
Causal link between funding and failure

- Do school districts mismanage funds?
- Does a student's socioeconomic status, rather than educational resources, play a determining role in achievement?
- Is an at risk student's educational potential shaped by their background?

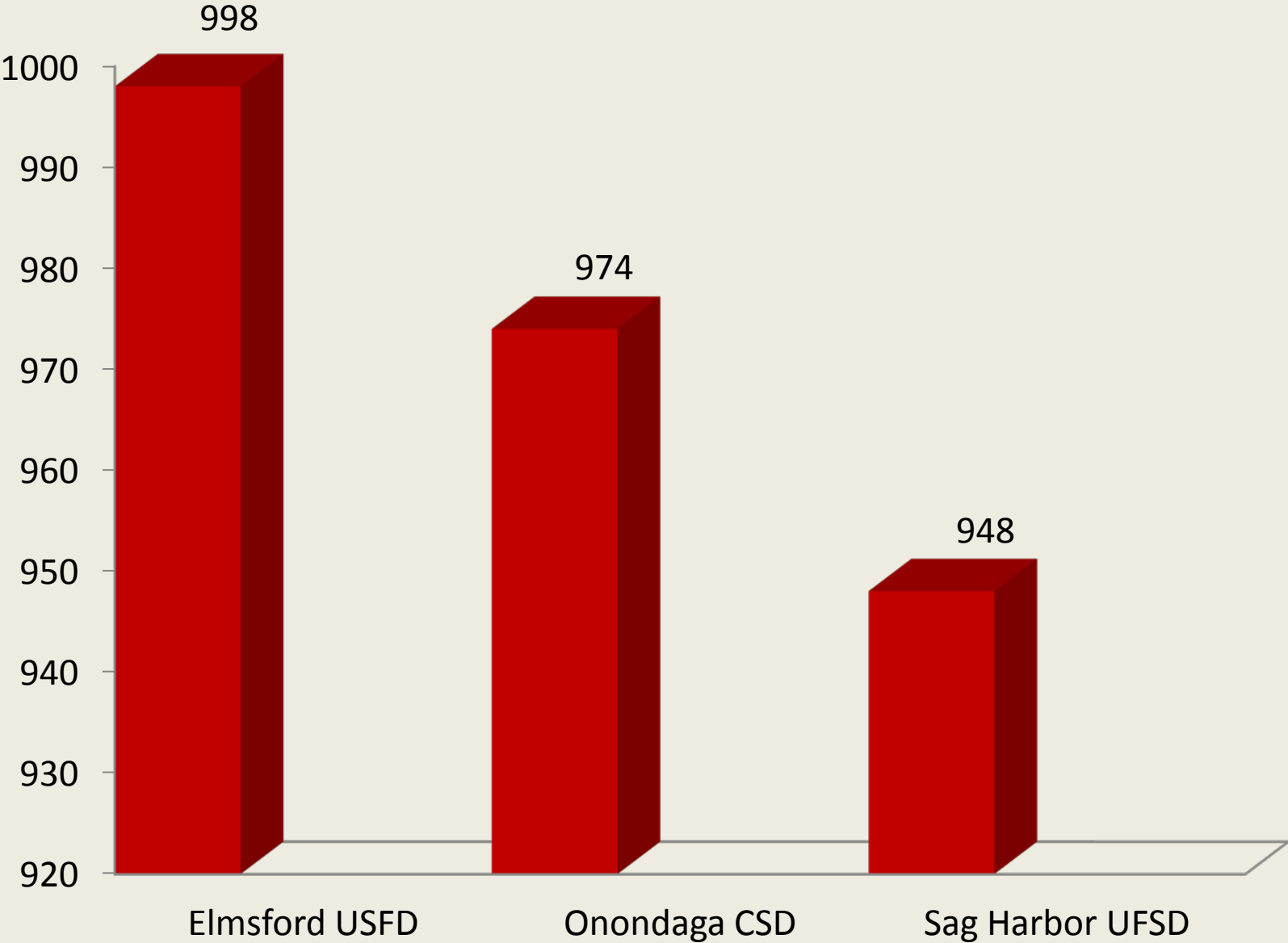
“The State Constitution reposes responsibility to provide a sound basic education with the State, and if the State's subdivisions act to impede the delivery of a sound basic education it is the State's responsibility under the constitution to remove such impediments”

Source of Data: NYSED School Aid Runs 2006-2011

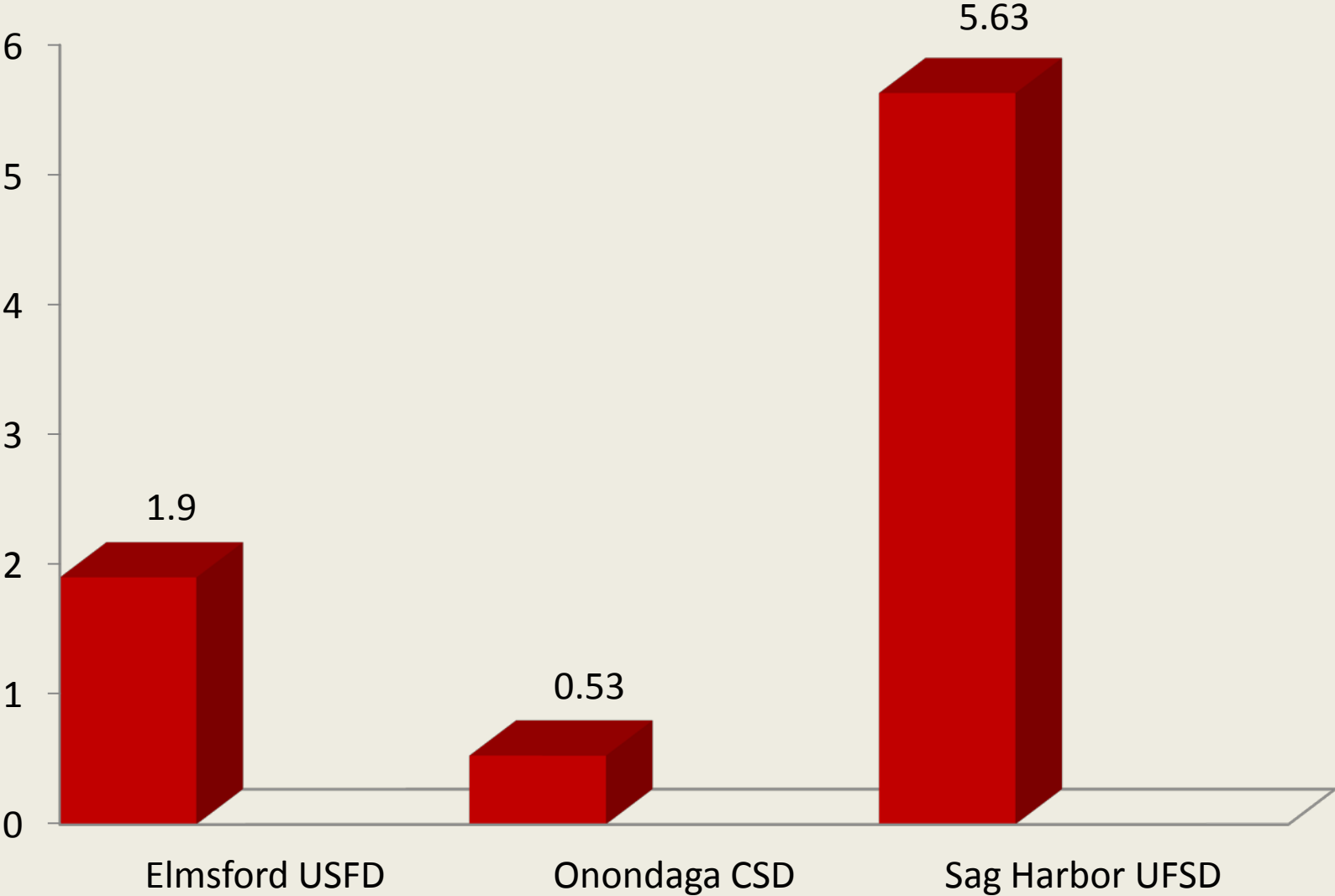
Taking Back the CFE Investment



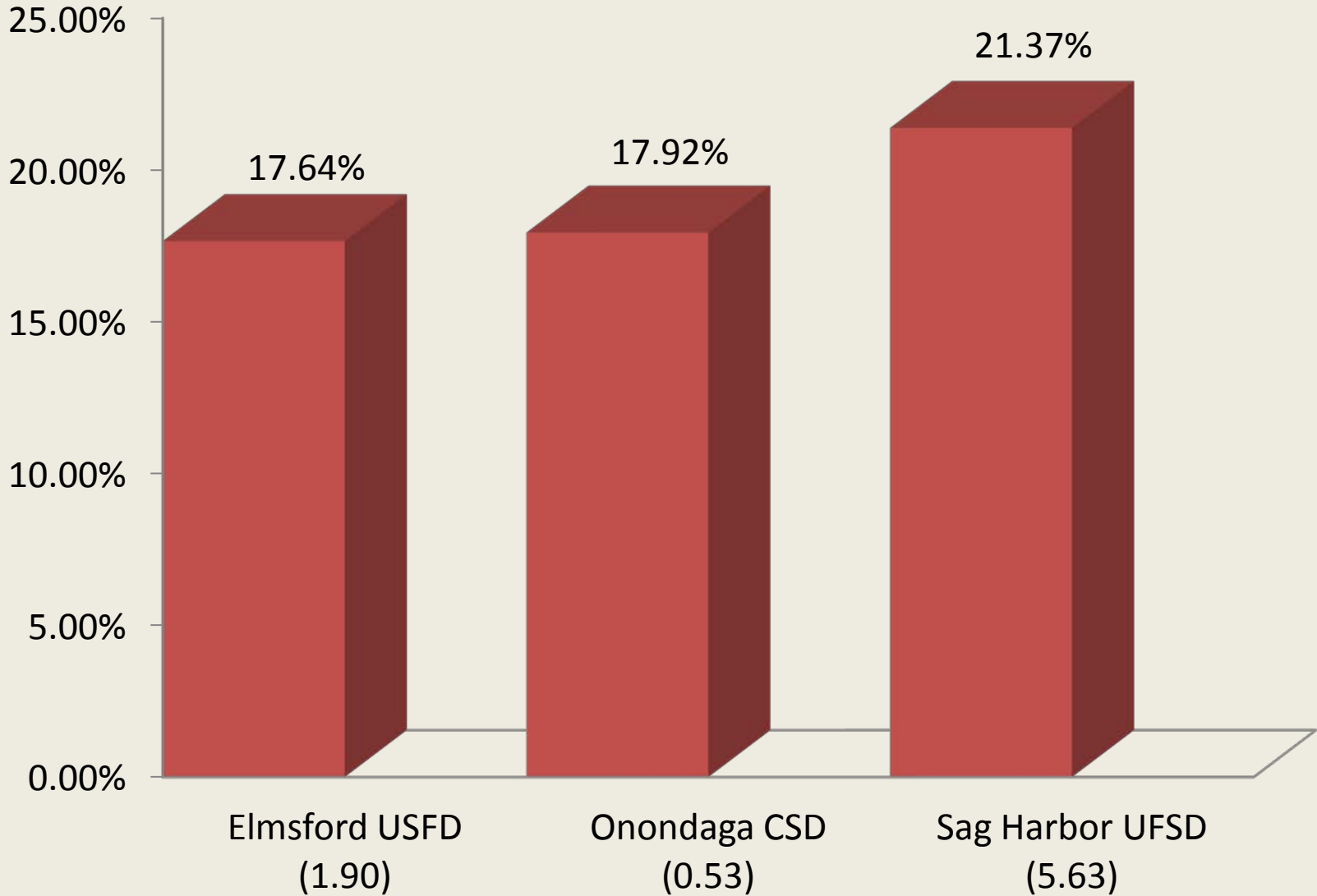
Enrollment



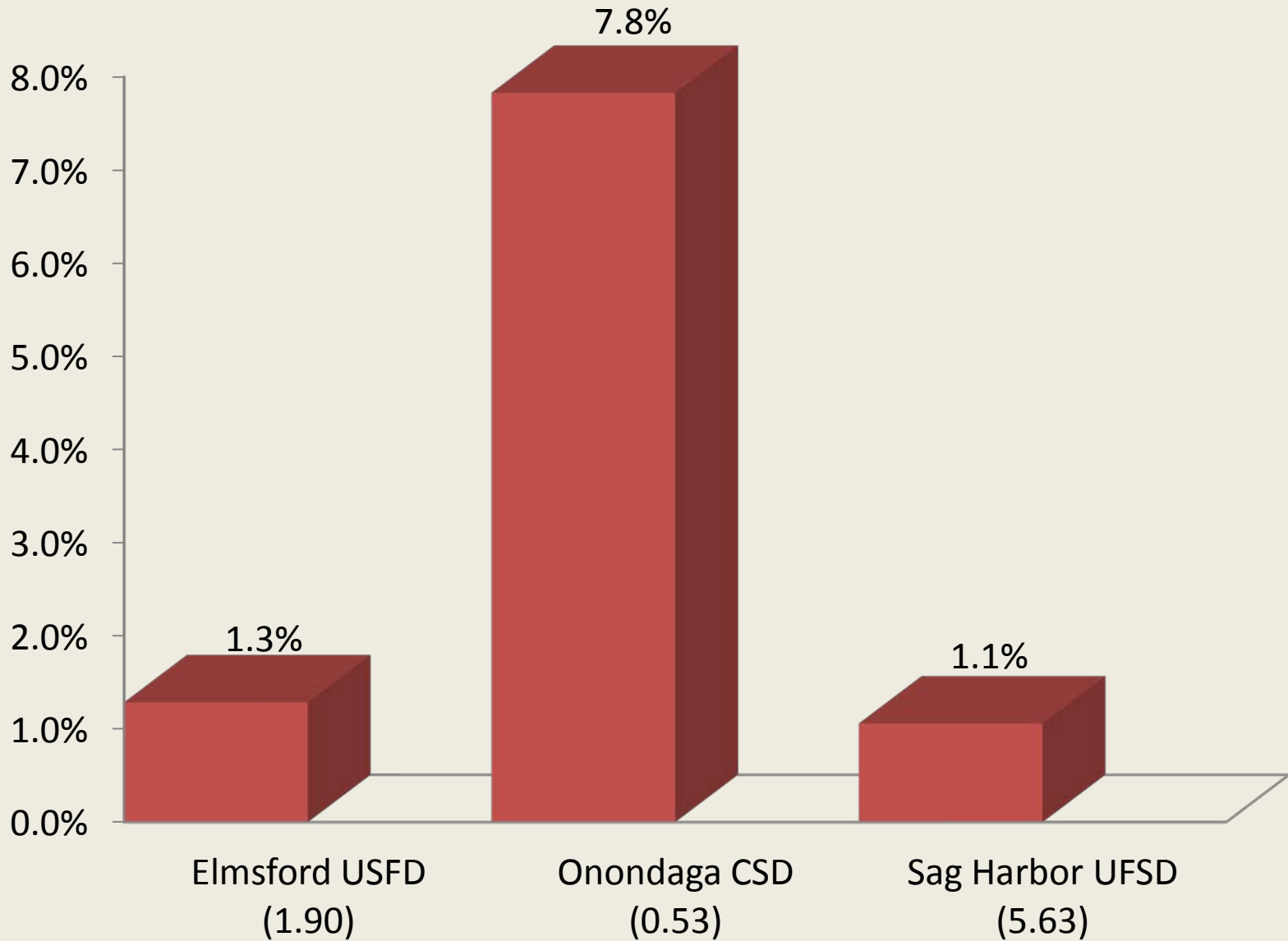
Combined Wealth Ratio
NYS average is 1.0



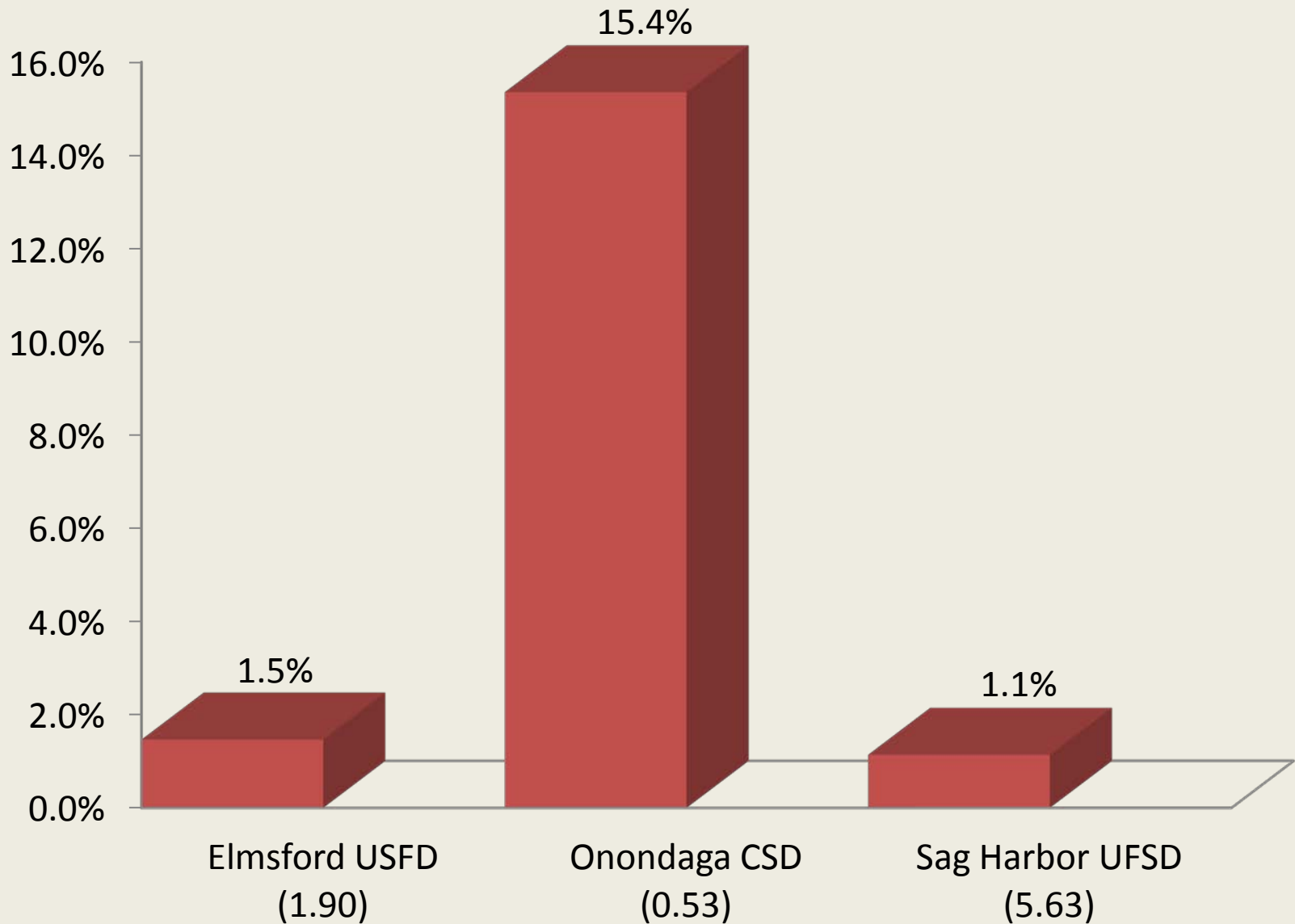
2011-12 Percent cut in state aid



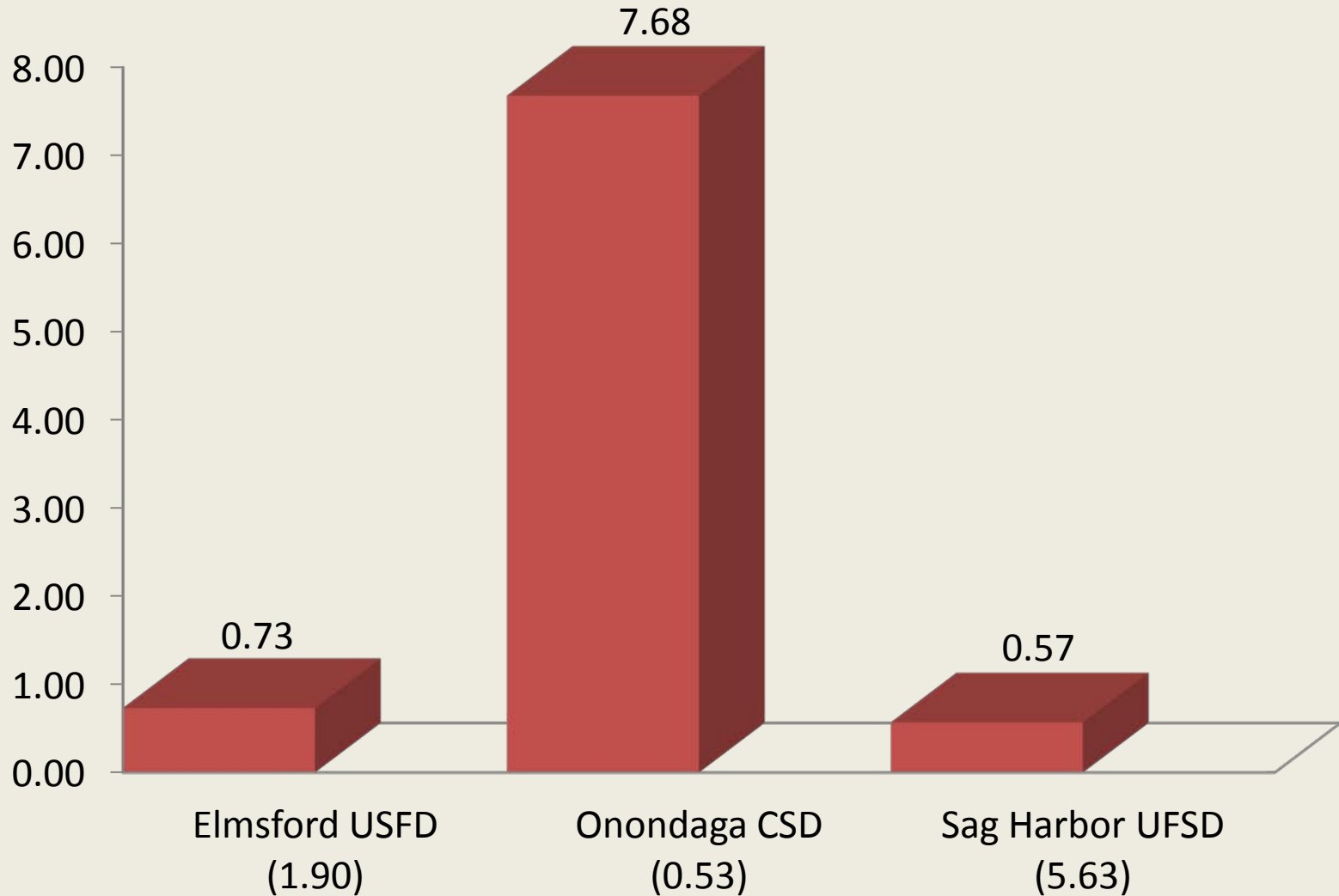
Cut in State Aid as a % of Total School Budget



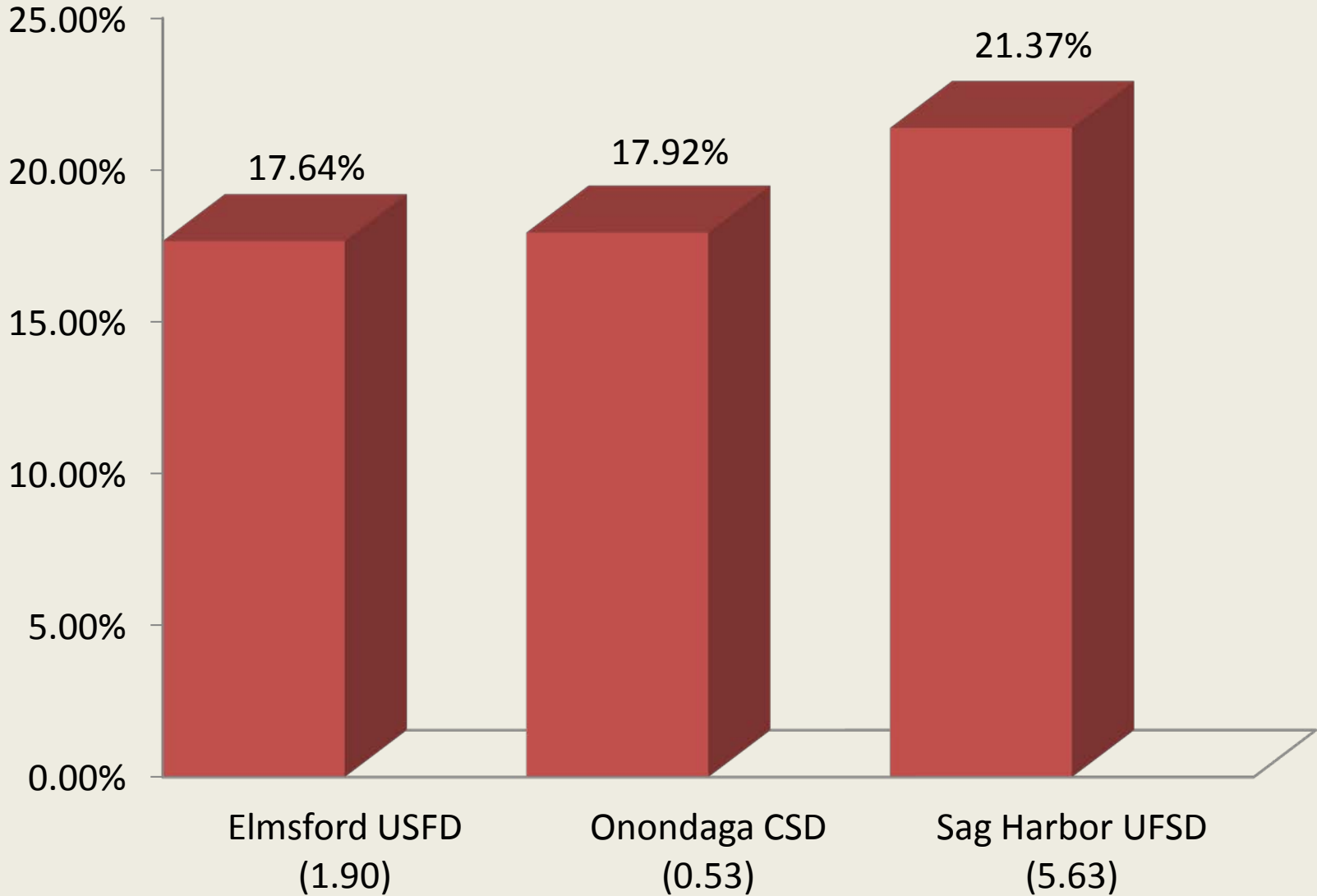
% Increase in Tax Levy Needed to Offset cut in aid



Years needed to pay for the 2011-12 cut in aid Under a 2% Property Tax Cap



2011-12 Percent cut in state aid



Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 USC §2000d)

“[n]o person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in , be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance”.

Sources

- The Syracuse Post Standard,
http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2011/03/upstate_ny_schools_bear_the_br.html
- New York State Property Tax Report Card 2010-11,
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/propertytax/>
- New York State Budget 2011-12,
<http://www.nysed.gov/stateaid/dist/legis10/cb/421201.html>
<http://www.nysed.gov/stateaid/dist/legis10/cb/580305.html>
<http://www.nysed.gov/stateaid/dist/legis10/cb/660409.html>
- New York State Aid Output Reports
<http://eservices.nysed.gov/sams-public/reports.do>
https://stateaid.nysed.gov/output_reports.htm
- School District Websites
<http://www.elmsd.org/index.html>
<http://www.ocs.cnyric.org/>
<http://www.sagharborschools.org/>
- Alliance for Quality Education
<http://www.aqeny.org/ny/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Widening-the-Equity-Funding-Gap.pdf>
- Campaign for Fiscal Equity
<http://www.cfequity.org/>

NYS Senator

John DeFrancisco, District 50

Baldwinsville, F-P, J-E, LaFayette, Liverpool, Lyncourt, Marcellus, OCS, Skaneateles, Solvay, Syracuse, W. Genesee, Westhill, and a portion of Cazenovia, F-M, J-D, N. Syracuse, Phoenix & Tully

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E-mail: jdefranc@senate.state.ny.us

NYS Assemblyman

Samuel D. Roberts, District 119

J-D, Liverpool, Lyncourt, Marcellus, Onondaga, Syracuse, West Genesee & Westhill, and a portion of ESM, Lafayette & N. Syr

Local Office: 4317 E. Genesee St., Room 103

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CNYSBA Legislators Contact Info

[http://www.cnysba.org/
index.php?src=gendocs&ref=
ContactLegislators&category=
Main](http://www.cnysba.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=ContactLegislators&category=Main)

Strategies when talking to your Senator or Assembly or media:

- Mandate Relief – where is it?
- Reserves are running out in districts
- Cuts are inevitable, but cuts must not continue to hurt poorer, low wealth districts more than wealthier districts that CHOOSE to offer more “extras”
- Senators ARE the solution and we need to challenge OUR representatives to do something for US – we cannot just list problems, we need to say – the distribution formula is not fair, equitable, nor predictable – what are You, Senator, going to do to fix this?
- We welcome reform to the system. Choose items you feel are appropriate- Senators and assembly members need to reform mandated and unfunded mandated expenses, pensions, practice of LIFO, health care contributions, millionaires tax... but first significant portions of the inequitable cuts must be restored.
- Don’t fall for the “wealthy Long Island pays higher taxes and needs help”. Fact: If wealthy districts on Long Island want to pay for non-mandated courses, activities, or classes for students above and beyond what is required, that is their CHOICE to pay the higher taxes that goes along with them. Any fiscal stress experienced by Long Island taxpayers in wealthy districts is a direct result of their choice of school offerings- they are often beyond anything we offer.
- The Statewide School Finance Consortium, <http://www.statewideonline.org> , has provided a sample method “restoration of aid to high need districts” that would go to districts with a CWR of less than 1.25
- Be Direct – move legislators to action to find allies to work with, such as Senator Gallivan.
- Get a commitment to help us; we are their constituents and have sacrificed long enough!

KEY ELECTED OFFICIALS

- **Governor Andrew M. Cuomo**
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224
- Phone: (518) 474-8390
- Fax: (518) 474-1513
-

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver
Albany Office

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Phone: (518) 455-3791

Email: speaker@assembly.state.ny.us

- **Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos**
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- Phone: (518) 455-3171
- Email address: skelos@nysenate.gov

Directions for Letter Writing

(Also great for emails and phone calls)

Please keep in mind that we are at a tipping point in the legislative season. The advocacy efforts of those in our community have the potential to save our upstate, rural school from devastating cuts. If you wish to use data then much of it is available at - www.statewideonline.org. Here is how to use this packet:

- The following letter will serve as a model of the structure of a business letter. Please note the format, style and punctuation. (A colon is always used in a greeting on a business letter. A colon is two dots, one above the other.)
- Refer to the model for the inside address and opening paragraph. We have provided you with five different opening paragraphs. Choose whichever one you would like. It is probably best that not everyone choose the first. The purpose of doing this was to have many people write letters, but not have all of them appear the same. The same general message is contained in each paragraph.
- Refer to the model for the second paragraph which defines the problem. Again, choose from the five options.
- Then, select one of the five options for the third paragraph. This paragraph will propose a solution to the problem.
- Refer to the model for five different ways to call your elected official to action. Choose one and add it to your letter.
- Finally, select a closing paragraph.
- Fax it, mail it, or e-mail it...and then, write another and another. We have limited time to make our case.

Sample Letter—for design and layout purposes
(Do not copy this letter for distribution - see instructions of
previous page)

Date

Assemblyman/Senator _____
Legislative Office Building _____
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Assemblyman/Senator _____:

As a resident of the *Onondaga Central School District*, I write today to beg your support of our school district. While I realize the dire financial position of the state, the continuation of a Gap Elimination Adjustment will drastically impact my school district.

The NYS budget has caused our school district, which is 42% dependent on state aid, to lose \$2,246 per pupil over the past two years. Simultaneously, wealthy suburban school districts have lost a fraction of what my district has lost. Those school districts have much more expansive programs than do we, and such minimal cuts to their school districts will have little impact upon their students. Conversely, our students may possibly lose their pre-kindergarten program, an elementary school, and countless teachers and support staff.

There is a simple solution to this. The average cut in the state is slated to be \$1,019. Instead of cutting our poor rural districts so drastically, the state should take \$1,019 per student in state aid from each district. The state would extract the identical savings to the current proposal and each district would lose the identical amount per pupil. This distribution of cuts would be much fairer.

As a parent of *three* children, I am scared. I am scared to think of what will become of the community in which I have purchased a home. And, I am scared to imagine the quality of the education my children will receive if state aid to education continues to deteriorate. Will you join Assemblymen Hawley, Burling and Oakes and Senator Gallivan in their quest to remedy the inequities? Each of them has publicly denounced the inequitable aid distribution. Will you do the same?

I would be glad to provide you with further information if it would be helpful. I beg you to represent our children. Please work with your upstate colleagues, regardless of party affiliation, to ensure our upstate schools are not devastated.

Sincerely,

Address
Phone

INSIDE ADDRESS AND OPENING PARAGRAPH

Dear Assemblyman/Senator _____:

CHOOSE ONE

- As a (resident/parent/student) of the *Onondaga Central School District*, I write today to beg your support of our school district. While I realize the dire financial position of the state, the continuation of a Gap Elimination Adjustment will drastically impact my school district.
- I am a (resident/parent/student) in the Onondaga Central School District and I write today to express my deep concern about what may happen to my school district. I know our state is facing enormous financial difficulties, but the continuation of a Gap Elimination Adjustment disproportionately hurts our school district more than others. This simply cannot be.
- I am scared. As a (resident/parent/taxpayer/student) in the Onondaga Central School District, I need your help. The continuation of a Gap Elimination Adjustment will simply devastate my school district, while other districts will barely feel the pain. The students in our district need your support to not allow this to happen.
- Upstate rural school districts are under attack. Their very being is at risk. As a (resident/parent/taxpayer/student) in the Onondaga Central School District, I am asking for your help in protecting our school district.
- As a resident and taxpayer in the Onondaga Central School District, I voted to elect you to represent us in Albany. I now need you to what we sent you to Albany to do. The continuation of a Gap Elimination Adjustment for my school district will cripple our school district and our community. Our students need your support as our representative in Albany.

PARAGRAPH NUMBER 2--STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

CHOOSE ONE

•The NYS budget has caused our school district, which is 42% dependent on state aid, to lose \$2,246 per pupil over the past two years. Simultaneously, the NYS budget has caused the Pittsford Central School District lose only \$836 per student, and the Scarsdale schools only \$314 per pupil. Those school districts have much more expansive programs than do we, and such minimal cuts to their school district will have little impact upon their students. Conversely, our students may indeed lose programs essential to their education, such as, pre-kindergarten, an elementary school, and countless teachers and staff .

•The aid cuts enacted by the NYS legislature disproportionately hurt schools in poor rural school districts. For example, our school district has lost \$2,246 per pupil, while the students in Westchester County have lost, on average, just \$722 per pupil. The students in those school districts already enjoy an enormous educational advantage over our students due to the extensive programs they offer. The aid cuts have caused our school district to reduce the number of educational opportunities for our children. I assure you this would not be the case in Westchester County.

•The NYS budget has had a devastating impact on the poor, rural school districts in our region. My own district has lost \$2,246 per pupil over the past two years! Simultaneously, wealthy suburban districts have lost well less than half of that amount. While those wealthy districts may make minor cuts to their programs, our school district is metaphorically "bleeding out." We may indeed be cutting programs that will have a devastating impact on our children...now and in the future.

•The NYS budget has cut the state aid for my school district almost four times the cut for the Sag Harbor union free school district. **FOUR TIMES FOR A DISTRICT OF SIMILAR SIZE!** The cut proposed for that school district will have little or no impact on their operations. Their students will continue to enjoy a program that our students have never even dreamed of. While the students of this wealthy district prosper from the education provided them, our students may have a school with half-day kindergarten, large classes, and significantly fewer athletics. We may even have to close our elementary school building.

•The NYS budget has widened the gap between the rich and the poor in our state. The recognized achievement gaps between students in wealthy communities and students in poorer communities will be exacerbated by the continuation of a Gap Elimination Adjustment. My district has lost \$2,246 per pupil over the past two years, while the students in wealthy districts, both upstate and downstate, will lose less than half that amount per pupil. This is simply unacceptable.

PARAGRAPH NUMBER 3—PROPOSED SOLUTION

CHOOSE ONE

- There is a simple solution to this. Both the Assembly and Senate need to recognize the current inequity in state aid to education. As such, I urge you to apportion funds so that those that have lost the most aid under the Gap Elimination Adjustment get the greatest restoration.
- One solution would be to reverse the Gap Elimination Adjustment with a more equitable distribution of state aid to education. This would take less funding away from those that were most hurt by the original GEA, yet would provide some increased funding for all districts. Doing this would lessen the destructive impact on the poor, mostly rural, school districts, while also hurting the wealthier school districts less.
- I propose that our elected leaders allocate NYS aid to education exactly in the same way that the Gap Elimination Adjustment undid aid to rural schools. This would restore more funding to those who lost the most under the GEA, while still providing additional funding to all districts. This would more hurt the poorer districts less while also providing more aid to all districts.
- The school districts in your legislative district are being hurt more deeply than many others in the state. There is one easy way to lessen the impact on your districts. NYS aid to education should be used to provide more funds to those who would have lost the most under the Governor's Gap Elimination Adjustment. While all districts would benefit, the districts that you represent would be hurt less than under the last two NYS budgets. Poor districts would be hurt less, while wealthier districts would benefit as well.
- One simple solution exists. Pass a NYS budget that undoes the inequity created by the Gap Elimination Adjustment. This would reduce the impact on the poorest districts while also providing some benefit to the wealthiest school districts. The new funds should be apportioned in the same manner as the aid was taken away. Those who would have lost the most would get the greatest restoration.

PARAGRAPH NUMBER 4—CALL TO ACTION

CHOOSE ONE

- I am scared. I am scared to think of what will become of the community in which I live/work. And, I am scared to imagine the quality of the education children will receive if the NYS budget continues to favor wealthier school districts. Will you join Senator Gallivan and Assemblymen Oakes, Burling and Hawling in publicly stating you will only support a budget that is fair to upstate, rural school districts? Our children, and our upstate economy, need your support on this.
- As our representative in Albany, will you support what I propose? Our children need you. Senator Gallivan and Assemblymen Burling, Hawley and Oakes have gone on the record in denouncing the inequity to education in the last two NYS budgets. Will you do the same?
- Now more than ever, those who elected you need your representation on what may be the most important issue you have ever faced. Will you vow to not vote for a state budget that disproportionately hurts districts like ours? A number of your Upstate colleagues have already made known their disgust with the inequities that exist in the Gap Elimination Adjustment. Will you do the same?
- Our children need your support. Can we count on you to promise to not support any budget bill that will disproportionately hurt our children? Will you join Assemblymen Burling, Hawley, and Oakes and Senator Gallivan supporting upstate, rural schools?
- As one elected to represent our community, can I count on you to support our school district? We need you to promise to not support future cuts to education. Other upstate Republicans, both in the Assembly and the Senate, have publicly denounced the Governor's aid proposal. Will you do the same? And, will you vow to only vote affirmatively for a budget that restores aid in an equitable fashion?

PARAGRAPH NUMBER 5—CLOSING

CHOOSE ONE

- I beg you to represent our children. Please work with your upstate colleagues, regardless of party affiliation, to ensure our upstate schools are not devastated.
- The economy of upstate New York is fully dependent on strong, vibrant schools. Please do all that you can to support the school districts in your legislative district. Thank you for your consideration and service.
- I hope I can count on you to protect our schools and our students. Your service to our region is appreciated.
- Thank you for all you have done in the past for the residents of our district. Please stand with us on this important issue.
- I deeply appreciate your strong support of our schools in the past, and hope you will demonstrate the same now and in the future. Our children need you.

Sincerely,

Respectfully,

Yours truly,

With sincere appreciation,

Name

Address

Phone Number

**Let's get 1,000 emails, letters
and phone calls complete in the
next week!**

Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The
most certain way to succeed is always to try
just one more time.

Thomas A. Edison