

DAVID J. VALESKY
SENATOR, 49TH DISTRICT

ALBANY OFFICE
ROOM 311
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
518-455-2838
FAX 518-426-6885

DISTRICT OFFICE
805 STATE OFFICE BUILDING
333 EAST WASHINGTON STREET
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK 13202
315-478-8745
FAX 315-474-3804
E-MAIL
valesky@nysenate.gov
WEBSITE
www.valesky.nysenate.gov

NEW YORK
STATE
SENATE
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247



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AGING COMMITTEE
COMMITTEES:
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TRANSPORTATION

March 1, 2012

Honorable Dean Skelos, Majority Leader
New York State Senate
416 Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator *Dean* Skelos,

I write to you today with a budget priority which I hope you will consider including in the Senate One-House Budget bill.

In speaking to many school superintendents in my district, it is becoming clear that even though the Executive Budget directs a small amount of additional aid to high-needs, low-wealth districts, the viability of these districts is endangered.

The districts to which I refer, many of them in Central New York, have already achieved drastic efficiencies through sharing services, eliminating expenses that are not related to their core mission, and working with administrators and teachers on salary concessions. By necessity, they undertook these steps at the outset of the fiscal crisis.

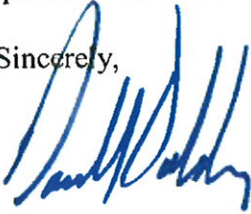
These are not schools who are concerned about eliminating foreign language for kindergarteners; instead, they are districts which are on the brink of insolvency with no reserves left, and whose mission to provide a basic, sound education to all students is threatened.

While I agree that competition is good, and that districts that take innovative action to improve efficiency in operation and improve outcomes should be rewarded, I believe the \$250 million earmarked for competitive grants in the Executive Budget would better serve the students of New York State if it was directed to high-needs districts which are struggling to stay fiscally solvent despite the best efforts of administrators, teachers, parents, and communities.

Many school districts in Central New York would be precluded from even applying for these grants because they do not meet the criteria.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the Senate One-House Budget shift the \$250 million from competitive grants and apply it instead to additional aid for high-needs districts. I appreciate your consideration this request, and please feel free to contact me if you have questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,



David J. Valesky
State Senator
49th District

cc: Senator A. John DeFrancisco, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
Mr. Robert Mujica, Secretary, Senate Finance Committee