



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Task Force On Alternative Funding And Fiscal Reform For Public Education

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS May 16, 2008

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The task force on alternative funding and fiscal reform for public education (“AFFIRM Ed”) was established by Senator Stewart-Cousins to address concerns of school superintendents, boards of education, teachers, parents, and residents of the 35th District regarding public education funding.

Historically, K-12 schools in New York State have been funded jointly from two primary sources: taxes on real property levied by local municipalities and aid from the State. AFFIRM Ed will explore funding alternatives to alleviate the tax burden on individual and corporate real property owners while preserving the goal of providing excellence in education for children throughout Westchester County.

At the same time, AFFIRM Ed will examine the formula for State aid to school districts, costs imposed on school districts by government, and appropriate cost management to accommodate fiscal limitations. There can be no meaningful reform in public education finance without taking appropriate account of those factors.

Accordingly, it is the mission of AFFIRM Ed to ensure that excellence in public K-12 education is available to all children in Westchester County by identifying a funding model that will provide adequate and reliable revenue for that purpose.

To that end, AFFIRM Ed will:

- explore alternative sources of school district funding to augment or replace funding through local property tax levies;
- explore measures by which school districts can contain and control costs;

- inform legislation proposed by the Governor’s Commission on Real Property Tax Fairness to ensure that any cap on property taxes does not have the effect of reallocating, rather than alleviating, the high tax burden of Westchester County residents; and
- propose legislation that will help school districts in Westchester County and throughout New York State attain excellence in education for high needs school districts without sacrificing the quality of education that has already been attained in high performing school districts.

In so doing, AFFIRM Ed will have both an obligation and an opportunity: to develop a system of public school funding that will require us all to share the burden—while allowing us all to enjoy the benefit—of having a well-educated society.