



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Skoufis

## Skoufis, Zebrowski Deliver Historic North Rockland School Aid and Tax Relief

JESSICA GULOTTA April 13, 2021

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Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley), and Assemblymember Ken Zebrowski (D-Rockland) announced a historic investment in school aid for the North Rockland School District in this year's state budget and, with it, a freeze in property taxes for the 2021-2022 school year. The lawmakers were joined by North Rockland Superintendent Kris Felicello and members of the school board, North Rockland Teachers Association President Debbie

Brennan, the North Rockland PTA, members of the North Rockland Chamber of Commerce, and local elected officials.

Senator Skoufis and Assemblyman Zebrowski secured two key provisions in the recently enacted state budget which provide substantial financial relief for the district to, in turn, be able to hold the line on school taxes all while increasing school programming. Skoufis, Zebrowski, and school officials announced that there will be no increase in the property tax levy - 0% - in the forthcoming school budget. At a time when so many families need a break from ever-increasing taxes, today's announcement is a big win for North Rockland taxpayers.

The first provision in the budget that provides financial support is a special tax certiorari fund in the state budget for school districts experiencing significant financial hardships created by an extraordinary change in powerplant assessments. This will provide some taxpayer relief from the Mirant debt crisis in North Rockland, which is the largest tax certiorari in New York State history. Through this new fund, North Rockland will receive approximately \$1 million.

More fundamentally, North Rockland will receive \$52.56 million in core school aid, a \$10.2 million increase from last year; this is an unprecedented 24% increase that will alleviate the burden on taxpayers, enhance classroom instruction, and support educators and staff. This is not a one-time increase and will be funding provided to North Rockland schools each and every year.

"I, alongside my partner in government Assemblyman Zebrowski, made it our mission during budget negotiations to deliver historic levels of funding for North Rockland schools as well as tangible property tax relief," **said Senator Skoufis**. "The school district's financial situation demanded the assistance and students, educators, and families need support as they safely

transition back to the classroom from virtual learning. This historic investment will be transformational for our schools and finally provide long-awaited relief for our taxpayers. While our work certainly continues, this win is an enormous one for the community."

**Assemblymember Ken Zebrowski**, "Each year, an estimated \$11 million dollars flies out the door toward debt that the North Rockland School District has been strapped with for decades - the largest tax certiorari in NYS history. That's millions of dollars being taken away from students, teachers, parents, and the North Rockland taxpayers. The historic infusion of funding that Senator Skoufis and I have successfully secured will be game changing for the district and taxpayers. We've been fighting for North Rockland for a long time and I am thrilled we could deliver in a year that no one thought possible. My sincere gratitude to the district, school community, parents, advocates and everyone that fought alongside us all these years. This budget is an enormous win for North Rockland and all of Rockland County school districts."

"Having been in the field of education for over 25 years as a teacher, coach, and principal, I know from all sides how essential it is to have a strong partnership with our representatives in state government," **said Superintendent Kris Felicello**. "My immense gratitude to Senator Skoufis and Assemblyman Zebrowski for their many years of hard work on behalf of this school district. The historic funding in this state budget that Senator Skoufis and Assemblyman Zebrowski fought for will help this school district not just stay afloat but thrive in the way that our students, educators, and families deserve. I look forward to what's ahead for our students and continuing to work together."

Senator Skoufis and Assemblyman Zebrowski remain committed to ensuring all students have access to a high quality education. In 2018, they secured special aid to transition North Rockland to a full-day kindergarten program.

**Please see the attached photo.**

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