

Jersey City Together  
*an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation*  
P.O. Box 136, Jersey City, NJ 07303

May 13, 2019

Dear Jersey City Board of Education Trustees:

We write to you today with deep frustration and anger.

The budget being considered tonight will be devastating for our city's students, teachers, paras, nurses, counselors, other critical staff and our schools as a whole. Class sizes are expected to balloon to more than 30 students per class. Legally mandated services for our students with special needs will go unmet, exposing the district and taxpayers to potential litigation. The impact of these cuts will reverberate negatively in our city for years.

We all knew the budget process this year would be challenging. But the scale of the cuts proposed was wholly preventable.

You and your fellow trustees had the explicit, sole authority to increase the local school tax levy to whatever amount was required to avoid this scale of staffing cuts; you also had the platform and mandate to force a public conversation with the city, demanding city officials relieve the tax burden for residents by holding its spending at bay. You did neither of these things.

But, tonight, and in the coming weeks, you have another opportunity to lead.

We urge you to stand with us and other allies to call on the City of Jersey City to take two, immediate actions:

- To certify as soon as possible the maximum funding from the payroll tax for the 2019-2020 school year to compensate for the \$27,192,633 in State Adjustment Aid cuts;
- To amend the draft municipal budget to include specific line items to be sent to the Jersey City Board of Education as soon as possible to alleviate the stress and uncertainty of layoff notices for hundreds of staff. Specifically, we call on you to demand monies from the city's \$35 million budget surplus and from one-time settlements or payments; these monies can and should be earmarked to prevent layoffs and rehire staff;

Mayor Fulop has publicly stated that he believes the payroll tax can only legally cover \$13.7 million of the \$27.2 million in state adjustment aid cuts. If this is true, any specific line items set aside for the Jersey City Board of Education should more than cover this difference.

Our schools are crying out for leadership. It is time for you to step up.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Jyl Josephson  
PS 26 Parent Leader, JCT Strategy Team

Brigid D'Souza  
PS 3 Parent Leader, St Aedan's Catholic Church

Rev. Mona Fitch-Elliott  
St. John's Lutheran Church

Rev. Jonathan Olavarria  
The HUB Church

Jennie Pu & Becky Ofrane  
President & VP, Cordero PS 37 PTA

Rachael Persaud  
President, PS 15 Parent Council

Bishop Dr. Joshua Rodriguez  
The Cityline Church

Rev. Dr. Alonzo Perry Sr.  
New Hope Missionary Baptist Church

Jillian Mellen, Maria Tolentino, & Shweta Bhatia  
President & VPs, CPA of PS 16

Keith Olkewicz  
President & on behalf of JCPPEA Executive Board

Kay Minus  
President, PS 17 Parent Council & McNair Aca. PSAA

Cory Seminowicz, Nicole Moulaison, & Evelyn Chan  
President & VPs, PS 5 PTA

Rev. Bill Sweeting  
Vroom Street Church

Rev. Jessica Lambert  
St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Dawn Ellerbe  
President, Lincoln HS Parent Council

Angela Santiago  
President, PS 3 PTA

Rev. Jeremiah Lepasana  
Hope Church, Jersey City

Alain Mentha  
Temple Beth El

Ja-Leel Williams  
Parent, PS 23

Rev. Jon Brown  
Old Bergen Church

Uche Akpa  
Fountain of Salvation Church

Rev. Tom Murphy  
St Paul's Episcopal Church

Rev. David Carment  
Greenville Church

Bernice Keller  
MS 4 Parent Council

Rev. Donovan Shoemaker  
Jersey City First Wesleyan Church

Rev. Dr. Stanley Hearst II  
Mt. Pisgah AME Church