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## Fwd: Jersey City and Our Schools

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The CPA of PS16 <ps16cpa@gmail.com>  
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There is no question that when we took office in 2013, there were many structural problems in Jersey City. From public safety, to taxes, to development, our team faced challenges on all fronts, but we also knew that finding ways to help support the Jersey City Board of Education was a top priority from day one.

Today, the Jersey City school system is facing major budgetary challenges. It is important to note that municipal government has limited direct input over schools, as there is an entirely separate elected body that is responsible for school oversight. Even with that in mind, it is difficult to put blame on them for the challenges our schools face. Jersey City schools were under a State takeover for the last 30 years, which means Trenton politicians - not Jersey City residents - had the final say. Furthermore, previous administrations may have not been focused on fiscal policies that protected the schools but in fairness, those administrations were operating within the guidelines given by Trenton to stimulate economic growth and act as the financial engine for NJ.

Despite all of those facts, the Board of Education, the City Council and I are committed to working together to solve our problems in a long-term, sustainable way. We are working cooperatively to find solutions that are fair to taxpayers and avoids this predicament from happening again.

So, what have we done to help so far?

- Our administration has paid more into the school's tax levy than at any other point in the City's history. We will continue this again this year with adding an additional \$11.6 million.
- The City has stopped the historical practice of long term tax abatements for market rate housing. This was a Jersey City practice for decades that we committed to phase out in a responsible way and we have done that. At this point, the city hasn't granted any tax abatements for years.
- The City instituted a payroll tax on corporations that employ non-Jersey City residents. Through this, the City will be able to cover the \$13.7 million reduction in adjustment aid from Trenton. This is the legal maximum that the City can cover directly and we certified with the Board of Education that we will be able to achieve this.

- We have worked with the Board of Education on shared service agreements, from security, to garbage collection, to recreation, alleviating \$5 million from the school system's budget this year.

What is our long term plan?

- We regularly meet with Board of Education members to discuss where we can find more shared services to help the budget.
- We have created a road map over several years to raise the levy in a responsible way. This plan would minimally impact the taxpayer and provide a long-term solution to close the systemic budget gap.
- The Board of Education has entered into long term contracts with teachers to have visibility and predictability into our budgets.

This is a priority for all residents of the City and the Board of Education, City Council and I are all focused on this. There are no easy answers here as we collectively correct decades of mismanagement, but we are all committed to working towards long term solutions.



Steven Fulop | Steven Fulop for Mayor 2021, P.O. Box 13025, Jersey City, NJ 07303

Unsubscribe [natasha.ioffe@gmail.com](mailto:natasha.ioffe@gmail.com)