



# Lakewood Board of Education

200 Ramsey Avenue, Lakewood, NJ 08701

Main Office: (732) 364-2400 Fax: (732) 905-3687

**Laura A. Winters**, Superintendent of Schools

**Kevin Campbell**, Interim Business Administrator

April 2, 2018

Dr. Lamont Repollet  
Acting Commissioner of Education  
New Jersey Department of Education  
PO Box 500  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Acting Commissioner Repollet:

The Lakewood School District is a high poverty district in Ocean County with a high concentration of “at risk students” and a dire financial situation. The district has been in a General Fund budgetary deficit since June 30, 2014 and ended the 2016-17 school year with a budgetary fund deficit of \$4,353,898. Over the last four years the district required a total of \$18,662,858 in state aid advances, a total of \$7,025,800 in Township contributions and the annual deferment of NJDOE audit refunds and repayments of the State Aid Advances to bridge significant budget shortfalls and provide our students with the constitutionally required thorough and efficient education.

For the 2018-19 school year, the district will once again suffer an estimated General Fund budget shortfall of \$28,182,090. Due to the ever-worsening financial situation created by borrowing for current expenses, I have no other choice but to request State assistance in order to provide a thorough and efficient education to our students via a Grant, not a loan, as the district has already incurred over \$18 million dollars in loans with no viable ability for timely payment, and has deferred most of the payments each year since acquiring state aid advances/loans. Without additional assistance from the State, the deficit and revenue shortfall will result in a catastrophic reduction in staff and educational programs and services and increase class sizes to 40 students or more.

In addition to significant increases in health benefits costs, the cost of operation and maintenance of aging school buildings, a teachers’ contract expiring at year-end and other necessary educational and operating costs, the district has incurred significant transportation and special education costs due to the unique circumstances of Lakewood. While Lakewood Public Schools has a resident student enrollment of about 6,000 students, the township also educates some 30,000 students and growing in over 100 nonpublic schools. Legally the Lakewood public school district is responsible for the payment of mandated student transportation and any special education needs of some 36,000 Lakewood resident students.



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The State's funding formula recognizes the public school district as a 6,000 student district and has never recognized the anomalies of Lakewood and the additional costs incurred by the district associated with 30,000 nonpublic students. That coupled with flat or minimally increased state funding the past decade, has created a situation where the Lakewood Public School District simply cannot provide the constitutionally required thorough and efficient education and its other State mandated services without additional state assistance over and above the regular state aid allocation.

Accordingly, I am requesting \$28,182,090 in Grant aid for the 2018-19 school year. No part of the Grant would be used for non-mandated (courtesy/safety) transportation, as Courtesy (safety) busing was eliminated from the district's 2016-17 school year budget and not included in any budget since.

Your consideration of this request is greatly appreciated. Its approval will ensure that the students of Lakewood receive a thorough and efficient education.

Respectfully,

*Laura A. Winters*

Laura A. Winters  
Superintendent of Lakewood Public Schools

- c. Glenn Forney, Director of State Monitors
- Judith DeStefano-Anen, Interim Executive County Superintendent
- Michael Azzara, Lead State Monitor
- David Shafter, State Monitor
- Kevin Campbell, Interim School Business Administrator/Board Secretary
- Robert Finger, Interim School Assistant Business Administrator
- Board of Education Members
- General Counsel Michael I. Inzelbuch, Esquire