

From: [Joni Johnson](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Cc: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#)
Subject: support for infancy-12 education
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Honorable Senate Finance Committee members,

I am writing out of concern for the proposed budget cuts to the school system and pre-school age kids. While budget cuts are necessary, the “sky is falling” approach is counterproductive. Budgets have been formulated as part of a five-year plan. At least in Petersburg, that has included tightening the belt over time knowing of the forecasted cuts. I believe that the State has known that there would be a budget shortfall, and remained complacent. Now we need visionaries that are not only looking at cuts, but also looking for additional funding... Outside the box thinking.

Specifically in the Petersburg School District, our school district has been managed in a fiscally responsible manner. The funding from the Borough of Petersburg has been flat over the years in spite of increasing operation costs (maintenance, not staff). Through reduction in force we’ve brought ourselves down to a small staff while still maintaining an attractive school. The local union has switched insurance plans, going to great efforts to do what is best for the school district. I teach at Petersburg High School, and I have a son in Stedman Elementary. This is a stellar school district that works incredibly hard and with a lot of care – for the students and the community.

I do not want to see cuts to the pre-school program “Best Beginnings” or the pre-K grants. These resources prepare kiddos and provide support to families in need. While Petersburg is a fairly affluent community, we have a good number of families below or at the poverty line and in need of support. Moreover, we are in a five-year baby boom, so there are a lot of pre-K

and kindergarten age children in need of these services. All evidence points to the importance of a stimulating and nourished pre-K child in their development, as well as reducing special services that they might need in the future. Little kids are such a critical age to support. So while I read that the state is behind K-12 students, the pre-K cannot be left out of this equation. The state needs to be behind ALL children from infancy forward.

Pulling out the carpet as the current legislature is proposing goes against being fiscally responsible. Go to the drawing board and begin to think outside the box. How do we increase revenues in the state? How can we advise institutions/businesses on the necessary cuts so that they can think within their vision statement and business plan? This is the direction that we need to go in the near future.

Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

/s/ Joni Johnson

Joni Johnson

cc: Sen. Stedman