



---

Board of Education

25 Corporate Park Drive • P.O. Box 396 • Hopewell Junction, NY 12533 • (845) 298-5000 x40145 • Fax (845) 896-1693

March 5, 2019

To: Andrew Cuomo, Governor of New York State  
John J. Flanagan, Temporary President and Majority Leader of NYS Senate  
Sue Serino, NYS Senator, 41<sup>st</sup> Senate District  
Michael Benedetto, Chair of NYS Senate Education Committee  
Kieran Michael Lalor, Assembly Member District 105  
Didi Barrett, Assembly Member District 106  
Shelley Mayer, New York State Assembly, Chair of Committee on Education  
MaryEllen Elia, Commissioner, NYSED  
Judith Johnson, 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Board of Regents

---

The Wappingers Board of Education would like to bring to your attention a long-term and ongoing problem with the implementation of the SMART Schools Bond Act (SSBA) that has resulted in a significant waste of the Wappingers Central School District's taxpayers' money.

The stated purpose of the SMART Schools Bond Act was to provide funding for Technology and Security updates to school districts throughout the state. In May of 2017, our Board of Education approved our SSBA Security Vestibule plan. On February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018, Steve McNally replied to our inquiry on the status of our proposal as follows: "Unfortunately, no. You are in Expenditure Review as of last June and the one person we have doing that is working on November 2016 plans. So, it will likely be some time."

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018, we contacted Assemblyman Kieran Lalor's office and Senator Sue Serino's office for assistance, and on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Assemblyman Lalor's office released a press release and an associated video, requesting an expedited approval process. March 14, 2018, the Poughkeepsie Journal published an article about our dilemma, followed by an article on March 27, 2018 about the legislation in general.

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Daren Lolkema, our Assistant Superintendent for Compliance and Information Systems, received confirmation from SSBA offices that our plan had moved out of 'expenditure review' and was now awaiting approval from the SSBA Funding Review Board. When he inquired when this board was to meet, he received the following information: "No, there is not one scheduled as of now. It is possible they may schedule one

very soon, but nothing has been confirmed. So, there is also a possibility that there will not be one for a while. Unfortunately, these things are determined by the Review Board, and I typically find out about them not long before the public does. We are hopeful that there will be one very soon, though.”

Finally, on December 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2018, we were notified that our proposal had been approved.

In the more than a year and a half it has taken for our proposal to be approved, there has been a significant increase in the cost of constructing the security vestibules for our fourteen school buildings. The original quote, made in March of 2017, has now increased from \$1,347,045 to 1,840,000 resulting in a difference of \$492,955.

The stated lack of sufficient personnel at the state level has caused a delay that has resulted in a significant increase in labor and materials costs. The increased costs have siphoned funds that could have been utilized for other projects to benefit our students. The delay in construction has placed our students and personnel in potential jeopardy.

Practically speaking, for the \$492,955 it has cost our district alone, the state might have hired several more staff members to expedite the approval process.

We are asking that you hire sufficient staff members in the next and future funding cycles to ensure timely project review and funding approval. We are also asking that you be transparent about the actual time frame you have established for the approval of proposals and distribution of funds. This information would facilitate our and other districts’ budgetary planning.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peggy Kellond, Board President". The signature is written in a cursive style.

The Wappingers Central School District Board of Education

cc: Lower Hudson Education Coalition and member districts  
Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents and member districts  
Dutchess County School Boards Association and member districts  
NYS School Boards Association