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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Hillsborough Education Leaders Oppose School Funding Cut**

For the past five years, under the school funding formula known as S2 which has cut our state aid annually for seven years, the Hillsborough Township Public Schools has created budgets that reflect our values and sought to protect positions and programs, for the benefit of our students. Preparing those has meant that we have consistently budgeted to the maximum of a 2% increase on the tax levy, as well as having put forth multiple referenda to the taxpayers of Hillsborough to help meet various needs. Just this year, the Hillsborough community graciously supported two questions to help hire back staff and create a security department.

Coming into this year we were projected to get a \$243,694 further cut in state aid. To be prepared for the possibility of a larger cut, the budget for this year was prepared to include a \$400,000 cut, well above what was projected. On Thursday, the State released its school funding numbers and Hillsborough learned that it would receive a \$2.7 million cut. No budget could have prepared for an unforeseen cut of this magnitude.

As Superintendent and HEA leadership, we are continuing our advocacy and are planning on to testify in Trenton about the impact that this will have on Hillsborough, which could include larger class sizes, less services for students, and less programmatic options for students. We continue engaging with local legislators, who have also voiced their concern, to seek solutions to the funding crisis that threatens to undermine the excellent education offered in Hillsborough public schools.

This year, Somerset County netted an additional \$21 million in state aid. Overall, since the implementation of S2 in 2020, Somerset County netted an additional \$106 million in state aid. Hillsborough is the only district in the county to have consistently lost state aid over this time.

“New Jersey has prided itself on having the best public schools in the nation and rightfully so,” stated HEA President Henry Goodhue, “But in face of a massive educator shortage and fluctuating funding, the challenge of providing the best for our students has become beyond

difficult. I commend the Governor and legislators for creating a pro-public education budget, but challenge them to take decisive action that protects the excellent educational outcomes of all districts, including Hillsborough."

While funding cuts are partially based on enrollment, it should be known that our enrollment has remained steady. In fact, many of our elementary schools, half of which are Title 1 schools, are at or above capacity. Funding cuts are also based upon projections of local tax rates. Indeed, Hillsborough's rates have increased. However, given the constraints of the 2% tax levy cap, our schools do not see any of the increased tax revenue due to additional rates in town. Rather, we are twice punished by legislation that has tied our hands and provides no true means to close the fair share gap to ensure our schools are appropriately funded.

That is why we are calling upon all community stakeholders to stand with our schools as we advocate for the means to appropriately address this challenge. In the immediate future, we call upon legislators to assess the impact of the proposed cuts and recognize their detrimental impact on students. We applaud our local legislators for already doing so and introducing legislation that would allow us to responsibly respond to fluctuations in school funding from the state. We must seek permanent fixes to this issue so we can ensure that all New Jersey's public school students receive the best education.

"As a Hillsborough resident, parent of three graduates (soon to be four), and the Superintendent of this proud town, I want to be able to provide the same level of high-quality education that my children have so generously received," stated Superintendent Mike Volpe. "That's all I want to do and have ever wanted to do. It's why I returned home to Hillsborough. Increasingly, such a goal is becoming harder and harder with each passing year."

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