Dear [Name of Legislator],

We need your help. As a resident of the Tredyffrin/Easttown School District, as well as a public school parent and your constituent, I am asking you to oppose any tax shift plan that eliminates the property tax in favor of other mechanisms, including higher sales and income taxes.

The plan is being touted as a victory for homeowners and a better way of funding public education, but it is not a panacea for taxpayers or school districts. Instead, the elimination of the property tax merely serves to create additional, higher tax burdens for other taxpayers and destabilize funding for public education. This new funding system would leave public schools dramatically under-funded and would force them to cut programs and staff.

The Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) has released a report showing that it would take $14 billion in alternative revenue sources to fill the void of eliminating property taxes in fiscal year 2016-17. That number is projected to reach $16.5 billion by 2021-22. That's how much would have to be collected in higher sales and income taxes to replace the lost local revenue.

Eliminating the property tax effectively shifts tax burden from large businesses to individuals, and fails to consider or address the factors driving school costs: pension, charter schools, special education, healthcare and numerous other mandates that are beyond the control of school boards and administrators. It also removes all safety valves to cover unexpected costs or school construction.

The plan will undo the work recently completed to enact a new basic education funding formula and provide a fair financial investment for school districts. Instead, districts will be placed in a system that lacks financial equity and predictability. School boards are accountable for spending decisions and student performance. By abolishing local ability to raise revenue or make financial decisions, the state will be responsible for the financial health of all 500 school districts.

The property tax provides a stable foundation for local communities to use as needed to support their schools. School boards need to be able to use a mix of local taxes and the development of available funding bases that are suitable to each school district's unique economic capabilities and conditions. If this funding formula is enacted, I do not see how school districts will be able to implement the programs for which they have carefully planned.

For these reasons, I ask you to oppose any plan to eliminate school property taxes.

Sincerely,

Name

Address