

# Oxford Area School District

David A. Woods  
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Many thanks to the honorable representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for their attentiveness to the Basic Education Funding issues, in particular the cost of special education and the stagnate level of funding for this important programming. Creating changes to the funding formula, which we know is of importance and key to the viability and sustainability of the Districts not only in this region but throughout the Commonwealth, should be top priority and Oxford certainly appreciates the opportunity to briefly comment to this panel.

Oxford Area School District is a rural district in southeastern Pennsylvania and has a budget of \$60 million dollars for roughly 3800 students. 13% of the population or 494 students out of the 3800 students cost the District on average \$20,000. In other words, Oxford Area receives the same amount of State funding of 1.5 million dollars that it has for the last 8 years, but out costs have increased 7 fold. We have an expenditure of \$10.6 million dollars for 13% of our special needs population. To compound the issue the State revenues have remain stagnate for the last 8 years due to a Hold Harmless provision which basically means that although our population has increased by a factor of 7 we have received the same funding that 8 years ago used to almost cover the expense of education the special needs population. Conversely, districts in which populations have decreased or their special education population decreased have been given the same amount of dollars from the State. They may not need the dollars to apply toward special education if their populations of special needs students have dropped.

Oxford Area is not unique in this issue but certainly we have met and exceeded our mandate to educate every child in our District. We run a tight program of checks and balances to insure that we are not frivolously handing our individual education plans or 504 plans that would qualify student for special services. However, it is difficult for me to assert that all public schools have the same rigorous standards as Oxford regarding the creation and implementation of an IEP or 504 that would enable a student for special services. Specifically Charter and Cyber-Charter schools.

Recently the State legislature had a bill in session that would have fairly mandated Charter and Cyber-Charter schools to report only the actual cost for special needs services rather than the practice of receiving students from Districts like Oxford and creating an IEP or 504 for the received students even through the student was not given a label by the school they attended historically. As a profit or non-profit organization these Charters are allowed under the current special education funding formula to charge a flat fee for special education services of roughly double their standard tuition or cost to the school district from which the student is a resident.

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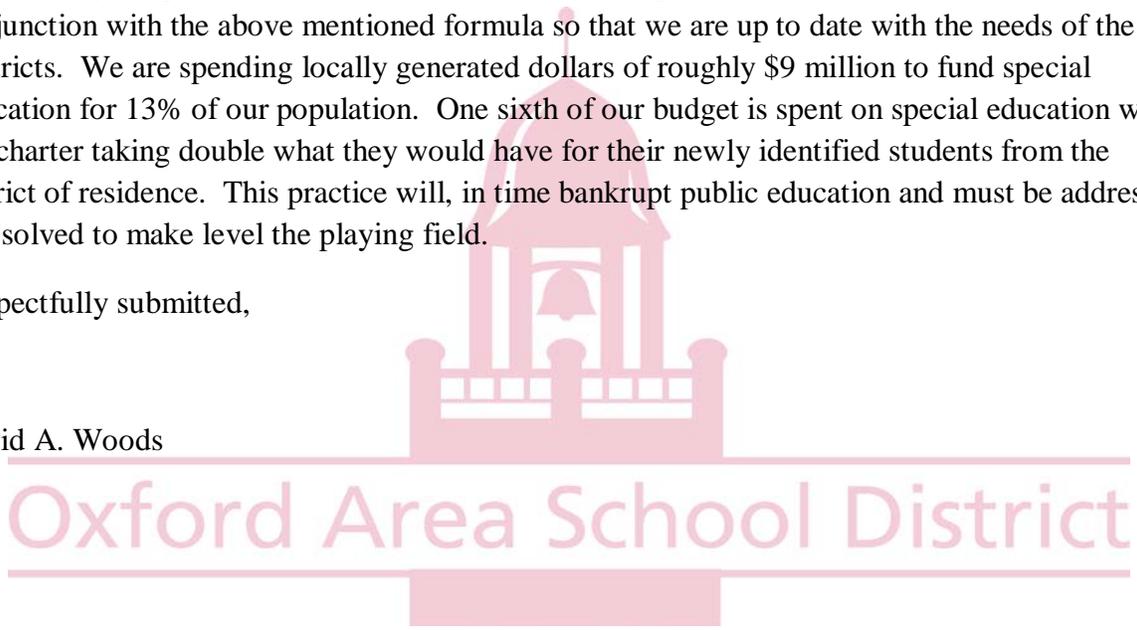
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Knowing that not every special education student bears the same cost, it is important that this committee address the inequity of the special education funding formula that allows this unscrupulous practice by the boards and owners of the charter and cyber charter schools.

Oxford and other similarly situated Districts throughout the Commonwealth need the special education funding formula to change to the actual expense of a child with special needs. Additionally the practice of Hold Harmless is something that needs to be addressed in conjunction with the above mentioned formula so that we are up to date with the needs of the Districts. We are spending locally generated dollars of roughly \$9 million to fund special education for 13% of our population. One sixth of our budget is spent on special education with the charter taking double what they would have for their newly identified students from the district of residence. This practice will, in time bankrupt public education and must be addressed and solved to make level the playing field.

Respectfully submitted,

David A. Woods



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Jordan Bank School   Elk Ridge School   Nottingham School   Hopewell School   Penn's Grove Middle School   Oxford Area High School

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