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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PISCATAWAY SCHOOL BOARD RETURNS FUNDS TO TAXPAYERS

Piscataway, NJ, July 26, 2018 – The Piscataway Board of Education voted unanimously to return \$792,778 to local taxpayers, the maximum amount allowable by law. The tax relief means that the average homeowner will have the school portion of their tax bill reduced by \$35 for the coming year.

This is the second consecutive year that the Piscataway Board has returned state aid to taxpayers. Last year, the Board returned \$995,236 to the taxpayers, bringing the two-year total amount returned to \$1,788,014.

The additional funding is the result of increased state aid from the State for the 2018-19 school year. The Piscataway District also received \$1,029,504 in additional state aid that must be earmarked for educational programs. The Board allocated these funds towards student technology, facility improvements, transportation, and instructional salaries.

“The School Board is acutely aware of the tax burden on local homeowners, and we are grateful that the State is starting to recognize the shortfall that Piscataway has experienced for many years,” said Board of Education President Alexandra Lopez. “I am hoping that the district is on its way to its full entitlement in state aid. This would mean a win-win situation for our students and local homeowners.”

In addition to this recent state allocation, the School District received an additional \$845,000 last March for use in the 2018-19 budget. The Board appropriated these funds towards strengthening security measures that include safety officers in each school, enhancement of mental health services, and improvements to public address and surveillance cameras.

“Piscataway has always strived to balance the educational needs of our students and the economic reality our taxpayers face,” said Superintendent of Schools Teresa M. Rafferty. “With additional state aid, our schools can begin to catch up in the areas of technology, we can upgrade facilities, and invest in transportation that will result in cost efficiencies. Our residents should be enormously proud of what we have accomplished with years of underfunding from the State.”

Even with the additional state aid this year, Piscataway's annual spending is well below surrounding school districts. During the 2015-16 school year, the most recent Taxpayer's Guide to Spending, Piscataway's per pupil cost was \$17,222 annually. South Plainfield spent \$18,848 per pupil; East Brunswick, \$21,172; Middlesex Borough, \$18,818; Franklin Township, \$21,731; and Highland Park, \$21,563.

The \$792,778 that is being returned to taxpayers this year is the maximum permissible by law. The general fund tax levy cannot go below the minimum tax levy as calculated in the certified budget.

Even with the increased state aid, the Piscataway School District continues to receive less state aid than it is entitled to by the State's School Funding Reform Act. According to the state's funding formula, the Piscataway Township School District is entitled to over \$33 million in state aid for its schools. The additional funding brings Piscataway's total state aid \$19,574,029, just 58% of the full state share.

"The Piscataway Board of Education will continue to press for fully funded state aid to relieve Piscataway taxpayers. We want to ensure that our students have the same opportunities as students in neighboring communities," said Board President Lopez.

Superintendent Rafferty also added that Piscataway's administrative costs, facility costs, and support services costs are all lower than the state average.

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About Piscataway Township Schools

Serving over 7,000 students, Piscataway Township Schools provide K - 12 and preschool programming, special education instructional programs and services, as well as before and aftercare, adult education classes, youth enrichment programs, and summer youth programs. The mission of the Piscataway Township Schools is the continual development of each child's intellectual, aesthetic, social and physical abilities in a positive environment that fosters self-esteem, to help all students realize their abilities and gifts.