

My name is Emma Cappelluti, and I serve as one of the student representatives on the Essex Westford School District School Board.

As a student, I see every day how important special education services are for my peers. These services are in jeopardy because of the upcoming Act 73. In our district alone, 31% of students receive support through an IEP or a 504 plan. That's more than 1 in 3 students—over a thousand kids whose success depends on these services.

Special education also represents about a third of our district's budget, because supporting students with different needs requires real resources, staff, and time.

Under Act 73, EWSD could lose nearly six million dollars due to the foundation formula. Maintenance of effort requires us to meet the previous year's expenditure which, if not met, would lose an additional 1.4 million dollars in federal funding for special education. That isn't just a budget change—it's fewer services and fewer supports for students who already face barriers in school.

Our district already works. We merged under Act 46, served nearly 4,000 students, and our outcomes exceed the state average.

Please protect special education funding and the students who rely on it.