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STATEMENT FROM SENATOR HUGH T. FARLEY

Since the Governor came out with his proposed budget in February, I have met with superintendents, school board members, and teachers from throughout my district. I've also spoken to the Chairs of the Senate Education Committee and Senate Finance Committee, as I serve on both committees, about the issues our region faces.

While we all recognize the State is facing a \$10 billion deficit, the Governor's budget was particularly unfair and inequitable to Upstate, and our schools were hit the hardest. My colleagues and I in the Senate passed the Senate's budget proposal yesterday and it restores \$280 million in State school aid to reduce the regional disparities in the Governor's budget. Most of the moneys would be directed towards Upstate schools.

As we go into budget negotiations with the Governor and the Assembly, I will continue to fight for my Upstate schools. While everyone will have to do more with less this year, the Senate is pushing for some restorations to help our region.

In addition to restoring \$280 million in State school aid, the Senate also stresses the need to ban all unfunded mandates on school districts and local governments. I am glad the Governor is on board with the Senate in calling for mandate relief. However, the suggestions from the Mandate Relief Team were very modest, and much more needs to be done. In the Senate, we are pushing for true mandate relief and we need to also strongly consider a new pension tier to reduce exploding pension costs that are putting a strain on school and local government budgets.