May 12, 2009

Hon. David A. Paterson
Governor
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY  12224

Dear Governor Paterson,

We commend you for your renewed focus on the problem of high local taxes in New York State, especially at this time of great fiscal hardship. As you know, the CBC stands behind you in recognizing that localities have a difficult time competing for businesses and residents with such onerous taxes, and that their burdens must be lowered.

To support that shared goal we ask that you veto A4628, a bill that would renew the provision that prohibits school districts from reducing the health insurance benefits offered to retirees unless the changes are approved by the local teachers union. Although this bill has been renewed annually for more than a decade, now is the time to reconsider the automatic extension of a measure that ties the hands of school districts seeking to control skyrocketing costs. State leaders should not stand in the way of school district managers that find ways to provide satisfactory benefits at reduced costs.

Your veto would send the same strong message about the necessity of lowering local taxes that you sent last year when you vetoed A9393, which would have extended the protections that retired teachers enjoy to other retirees of New York's State and local government agencies. New York cannot afford to continue these costly mandates and should, whenever the opportunity arises, roll some of them back. You have that opportunity now and we urge you to seize it with the veto of A4628.

Sincerely,

Carol Kellermann