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Kingston school trustees seek education forum with Faso

Board says education issues need attention

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KINGSTON, N.Y. >> School trustees are disappointed that U.S. Rep. John Faso, R-Kinderhook, did not address education issues during a recent public forum in the town of Esopus, and want the congressman to meet with district leaders to answer questions that were not addressed there.

At a Board of Education meeting last week, Trustee Suzanne Jordan said there were four board members at the Esopus forum, but none of their questions were among the 20 chosen during the 90-minute event.

“There was not one question regarding education, which was a bit of a disappointment,” Jordan said. “There’s a lot to worry about.”

Board members at the Esopus session on Aug. 31 also included Robin Jacobowitz, James Shaugnessy and Nora Scherer.

Jordan said board members wanted answers on changing federal mandates, food standards, teacher training, and why there is a threat to remove Medicaid money that provides needed services for some students.

“If he cuts Medicaid, these kids are not going to get the service they require,” she said.

Jordan suggested the Ulster County School Boards Association try to organize a meeting with Faso that includes several districts. “He likes to meet with smaller constituent groups, and I thought maybe he would be willing to set up a meeting with people interested in education,” she said.

Faso spokesman John Lange said via email that a meeting could be arranged, but more information would be needed.

“I think we would need to get a better understanding from the group about what exactly they’re looking for before answering that,” he wrote. “We can’t just agree to host forums by hearing about them through third-parties, and that we really know nothing about — they are big productions that require a lot of planning in addition to being a massive use of staff resources and an expense to taxpayers (such as for) security. If the group is just looking for a meeting with a number of teachers and/or education professionals, the congressman takes meetings like that all the time and would be happy to.”

Lange said it is unfair to criticize the absence of an education discussion at the Esopus forum because Faso