

The Tuition Crisis

Let's Change the Status Quo

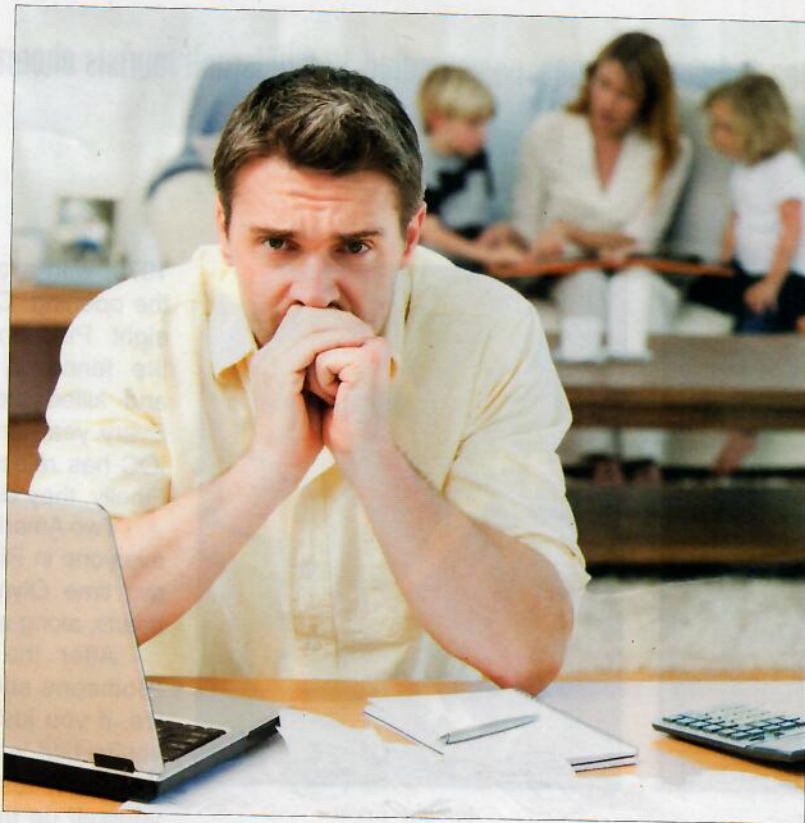
Isaac Douek

I am 25 years old, married with an 18-month-old toddler. In just a few years, I will be sending my daughter to school and paying tuition. The idea of having another child scares me and I am not alone.

The thought of paying tuition frightens me, and I am not alone. My peers feel the exact same way. How can we afford to pay \$25,000 per year tuition, on average, per child, for the next 20 years? Assuming my wife and I have four children, that's \$100,000 per year, based on today's prices. If each child begins with preschool, I will have a tuition bill for the next two decades. I can't think of a more effective means of birth control.

This is the single biggest epidemic facing our community. Despite the fact that this issue has been growing for decades, little has been done to resolve it.

Proudly, our community spends hundreds of millions of dollars on infrastructure, buildings synagogues and other community buildings. We are very philanthropic, helping the poor and needy—today, young community families are the needy. If



the issue of tuition and how to make Jewish education affordable is not resolved, and soon, it could be the downfall of our community.

Nearly half of the families who send their children to yeshivahs receive tuition assistance of some sort. This problem creates stress in the home, makes young men postpone marriage and it is causing us to worry about having children. Is

this what our community was built on? No!

If a husband earns \$300,000 gross income and nets \$225,000 a year. With four children he pays an average of \$100,000 in tuition. That leaves the family with \$125,000 to support six people for the year (rent, car, health insurance, food, clothes). In any other community, \$300,000 would be a nice income. In our community, that same family must receive tuition assistance. It's a huge problem.

There are parents who lie awake at night, stressed over how they will pay

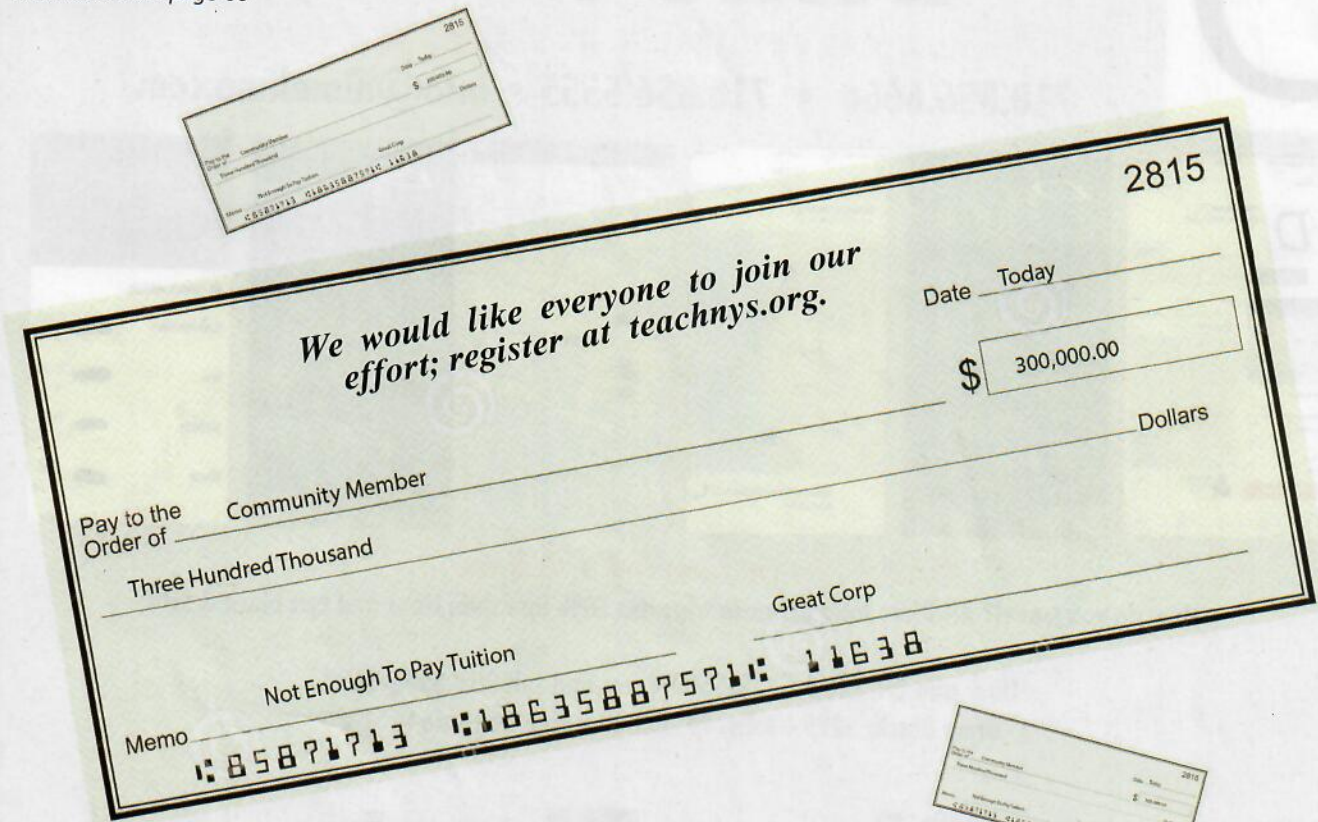
doctor's bills and make ends meet. The system is broken and our community must act.

We need a long term sustainable solution to fix this problem. The solution is not one fundraiser. It will be in layers—a little from here and a little from there, all combined for a sustainable solution to alleviate the burden on parents.

Continued on page 68

Tuition...

Continued from page 66



For example, TEACH NYS is working on government relief and has been successful at getting funding for security, STEM education and other state mandated items. They have also been successful in getting the state to understand that it has an obligation to all children, not just those who attend public school.

As terrific as the accomplishments of Teach NYS are, our community needs more relief.

The key to financial sustainability is a donor directed endowment fund. This is a crucial element to resolve the issue and produce income for the schools for years to come.

Project Education, which is led by Albert Laboz, drives the community conversation and all efforts about the tuition issue. This organization is also a significant component to solving this crisis.

There are amazing leaders in this community, great people with

great minds who can lead the charge, step up and implement a lasting solution.

We must ensure that the next generation is free of this problem. Only when Jewish education is affordable, can we ensure the future of our community as a whole.

Our community can solve this problem and reform the system. If we are determined and hopeful, anything is possible. Our community's future depends on it.

As we know, actions speak louder than words. And many of us have been working diligently, day after day, to find a strategic solution. We've met with leaders of the community, boards of schools and government officials.

Money is helpful but it is not the only solution. We need bodies, we need action, we need participation from every community member. We need **you** to board that bus to Albany to show that **we** care. We need **you** to campaign in our synagogues. We

need **you** to bring awareness. We need **your** ideas. We need **you** to vote for what **you** believe in. This is about **you, we, us—all the people in our community**.

As I walk around this community, I see people with great minds, great ideas, and great ambition. We can and will solve this issue. Out of many, we are one; while we breathe, we hope. And where we are met with cynicism and doubt, we will respond with that timeless resolve that sums up this community and the Jewish religion.

Our road will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in a year or even a generation, but I have never been more hopeful than I am today that we will get there. We, as a community, will get there. Please join us in this effort as we make this world a better place for our children and grandchildren. □

Isaac Douek is working tirelessly to solve the tuition crisis.