

Brown Deer School District Joint Finance Committee Testimony - Wednesday, April 5, 2017

*Good morning - My name is **Dr. Monica Kelsey-Brown**, Director of Teaching and Learning for Brown Deer Public Schools. We represent one of the most diverse school districts in the state with 70% students of color and poverty over 50%.*

The Governor has proposed an increase in per pupil aid for public schools for 2017-2019 biennium budget. We have utilized all of the Governor's tools to reduce property taxes, saving millions of dollars for the citizens of Brown Deer. Our teachers and staff have always contributed to costs of medical insurance. We are opposed to tying any per pupil aid to Act 10 as this conditional expectation would unfairly penalize our support staff who have the lowest salaries in our district.

We need the increased per pupil aid to support our teachers directly in the classroom with curriculum, technology, and additional instructional staff. K-12 public education is the one entity that we can rely on that will prepare the future workforce. We ask that you maintain the Governor's budgeted allocation for per pupil aid without the Act 10 restriction.

*Greetings - My name is **Tosha Womack**, proud Principal of Brown Deer Middle/High School and proud mother of five with four children attending public schools and one at Marquette University.*

The Brown Deer School District has made tremendous strides in closing the achievement gap. Our majority-minority district of African Americans has one of the best graduation rates of high schools in the state. In 2016 - every single high school senior student graduated - 100%. We have been able to accomplish these goals through the hard work and commitment of our staff. We believe that non-cognitive skills of values & virtues are crucial to long-term academic and personal success.

Last year, Brown Deer MHS was awarded the State and National School of Character - one of only 68 schools across the nation to be recognized and one of the first public high schools in WI to be named a National School of Character. We have transformed our school climate and culture by promoting respect, responsibility, honesty, integrity, even when no one is watching - this is the Brown Deer Way. As we plan for the future of Wisconsin education, non-academic indicators are vital to the overall success of each of our students.

*Thank you for your time today, my name is **Kortney Smith**, proud Principal of Brown Deer Elementary School. I am also the mother of two children who attended public school and a son who has pursued his dream of attending college and playing NCAA athletics. In Brown Deer, we proudly serve every student who comes through our doors despite the increasing academic needs, poverty, and mental health challenges. We have experienced an increase of special needs children including those with significant emotional needs. We spend a majority of our day dealing with about 5% of our students who suffer from mental illness.*

We need First Lady Tonette Walker's "Fostering Futures" program today, we need trained professionals to assist us with the well-being of our children so that ALL children can learn and all teachers can teach. We applaud the Governor's support for Social Workers as these professionals are an integral aspect of supporting students, families, and staff. We need a multi-faceted approach to working with students and families as our schools are not equipped to be therapeutic hospitals. Thank you for your time and consideration on these important educational matters.

Dr. Deb Kerr - Superintendent

We thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts today in regard to the proposed Governor's Budget. As Superintendent of the Brown Deer School District, it is my privilege to advocate for the 1,600 Brown Deer children, 900 families, 250 staff, and 12,000 citizens in our school community. We are "Exceeding At Succeeding" as evidenced by our recent school report card. We believe your decisions must prioritize education as an investment for ALL children in Wisconsin. Three ways in which to prioritize education is through "Equity, Local Governance, and Opportunity for ALL."

- 1) Equity - All children deserve to have a quality education taught by quality teachers. We need to do whatever it takes to provide students with the resources needed for success. Let's eliminate the inequities - any mandates or policies should be for ALL students and all schools. For example, let's level the playing field by repealing the Sept 1 Start date. Many of the charter and private schools around Milwaukee have the option of starting school in August and those schools receive public funding from the State of Wisconsin. Let's make sure that all entities receiving public dollars are subject to the same requirements and accountabilities of public schools.
- 2) Local Governance - Provide school boards with the tools they need to support student learning in their communities. Elected officials understand best the context for learning in their neighborhoods. Our students not only need more time to prepare for Advanced Placement exams but need more time to gain proficiency with direct instruction and strategic interventions. Allow elected officials the choice on when to implement a school calendar. As Past-President of our State Superintendent's Association (WASDA), the majority of Supt's across the state and School Boards representing thousands of students are in support of the repeal of the Sept 1 start date as evidenced by numerous resolutions and letters from community groups. Learning should never be bound by a ten month calendar but provide constant educational opportunities - this is what our children need.
- 3) Opportunity - It is unrealistic to expect all students to achieve college & career readiness without providing the flexibilities and opportunities necessary to do this challenging work. You have asked us to do more with less and we have. We are extremely concerned with the latest referendum bills to restrict local communities the opportunity to support their public schools. Let the voters decide the educational priorities of their own communities. The Wisconsin economy is improving and it is time to allow schools the resources for costs which we cannot control or eliminate.

Finally, the road to prosperity in Wisconsin is through our education system - let's not compete with other's agendas. Let's work together keeping in mind, equity, local governance and educational opportunities for ALL of our students, not just for the rich ones or the lucky ones but for each and every student to maximize their potential. We can provide a quality education for ALL students in WI - only these priorities will move Wisconsin Forward.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Monica Kelsey- Brown

Tosha Womak

Kortney Smith

Dr. Deb Kerr