



Kewaskum School District

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The Kewaskum School District ignites a passion for learning.

My name is Jim Smasal, and I am the District Administrator for the Kewaskum School District. Located in the heart of the Kettle Moraine State Forest, we are a K-12 district which educates students in the Village of Kewaskum and eight surrounding townships, encompassing nearly 155 square miles. The district serves approximately 1,850 students in two elementary schools, one project-based elementary charter school, one middle school, and one high school. We are proud to share that two of our elementary schools have been awarded School of Recognition awards the past two years and our high school was on the Advanced Placement District Honor Roll.

Kewaskum School District supports Governor Walker's budget proposal to invest an additional \$648 million in student success. The increase in categorical aid of \$200 in 2017-18 and an additional \$204 in 2018-19 will allow our district to continue a strategic plan to improve student learning through staff development, updated technology, and the ability to retain quality educators through a collaboratively designed compensation model. Over the past six years, the district has cut its operating budget by 7.5% or \$1.7 million; this doesn't include inflationary costs which total another 10% over the same 6 year period.

Since Act 10, our budget reductions included a 32% decrease in insurance benefit costs. Additionally, since 1993, we have had to adapt to the revenue limit formula where our pupil revenue limit is 9% lower than the state average. This is part of the reason we needed to pass a building referendum last November for improvement of our facilities. It is a monumental challenge to explain to taxpayers why a project of this magnitude has gotten to this point, as it should have been taken care of in the year-to-year budgeting. Consequently, you are continually defending the managing the district financials.

Any future cuts will impact students. Without additional funding, the Kewaskum School District will have to cut programs and personnel that will negatively impact student learning. Our district also supports the proposed funding for programs to address student mental health issues. Kewaskum is located in a rural setting with limited access to mental health support services. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with community mental health providers, such as counselors and social workers, to provide on-site services for our students and their families.

We ask the Joint Finance Committee to approve a biennial budget that supports public schools and student success. We also ask the Committee to allow local control through elected School Boards in allocating those resources in a way that best serves our district.

Thank you for your time today.