



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF TURTLE LAKE

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"The Turtle Lake School Community instills excellence in staff and students producing graduates with the knowledge and tools necessary to excel in all aspects of life."

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April 18th, 2017

Dear Joint Finance Committee Members,

I would like to thank the Joint Finance Committee co-chairs and members for this opportunity to testify and for your dedication to education in the state of Wisconsin.

The School District of Turtle Lake would like to thank the committee for working from Governor Walker's proposed budget and for removing non-fiscal items from the budget. However, our fear is that some of these items will be added to the budget in the 11th hour of the process.

We are very happy to see the support for mental health in our school. As Superintendent I personally see mental health as the biggest growing problem we have in our schools today. Improving access to mental health services is great and we will definitely be taking advantage of grants or services offered. I do want to make the committee aware that no matter how much money is delegated to supporting school based mental health, it may not make a difference with students if there is not an investment in the shortage of therapists in Northern Wisconsin.

We strongly support the additional \$200/\$204 per pupil and sparsity aid in Governor Walker's proposed budget. This money will help us replace desks, worn carpet and keep up with technology in our district. We have a long list of deferred maintenance projects including replacing the leaking roof of our school building and replacing crumbling sidewalks.

Our district works hard to bring in additional dollars and has a community that supports the school with donations of equipment, labor and money. Over the last five years the School District has been awarded \$110,000 in grants and received donations of over \$245,000. The grants and donations have not been enough to support our programming and operations. Over the past 10 years we have decreased salaries by 12% and cut staff benefits by 20%. Due to declining enrollment we have cut a counselor, English teacher, art teacher, cut the family and consumer education program, reduced our agricultural program to 50% and reduced several positions to part time. In 2012 we passed a \$1.8 million referendum to catch up on missing technology, curriculum, security, and deferred maintenance projects. This month our community passed a 4.6 million referendum to continue offering programs and opportunities for our students. We CAN NOT continue to support our school with referendums. At this rate our 2022 referendum will be \$8-\$10 million over five years. With the current funding formula our district appears to

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be wealthy, but in fact 50% of our students receive free or reduced meals. The School District of Turtle Lake receives only 12% of the revenue limit from state aid. The taxpayers are left to pick up the remaining 88% plus nearly \$1 million a year in referendum dollars.

The referendums are just a band aid on the wounds that the funding formula created. We need school finance reform and urge you to support an initiative to study reform and how we can make it happen for the future education of our students.

Kent M. Kindschy

Superintendent

School District of Turtle Lake