

March 9, 2015

Representative Joel Kleefisch
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708-8952

Dear Representative Kleefisch:

Our public schools face a myriad of challenges as they adapt to meet the demands of the global economy, their changing demographics and accountability reform initiatives. As we have conversations throughout Wisconsin about the latest reforms in K-12 education, we must also talk about our investment in public education.

The state and our local communities are critical shareholders in our public education system. As such, we need to protect our mutual investment and make sure that our public schools are healthy and vibrant, geared for the future and preparing students for tomorrow's jobs.

Since the 1993-94 school year, school districts have been operating under state-imposed per pupil revenue limits that cap the amount that schools can collect in state aid and local property taxes combined, and thus serve to limit school spending. Until recently, revenue limits have been increased annually at the rate of inflation to accommodate increases in costs to school districts, providing a stable and predictable annual increase for schools to use in budgetary planning.

Governor Walker's proposed 2015-17 state budget allows no increase in revenue limits in either the 2015-16 or 2016-17 school years. With revenue limits frozen, none of the additional state dollars proposed for K-12 education general aid (i.e., \$108 million in 2016-17) will go to classrooms. On top of that, the budget proposal eliminates \$127 million in per pupil aid in 2015-16, an immediate and actual cut of \$150 per pupil for every school district in the State. Because this aid has been provided outside the revenue limit, districts have no authority to tax to recapture this lost aid.

In simple terms, our district will have \$216,760.00 less to work with than we do this year. In order to make our budget balance, the district will have to lay off five teachers. This means less service to students, larger class sizes and fewer programs without talking about any rising costs in insurance, benefits or salary. The district has enacted savings from the ACT 10 legislation but the savings are not enough to cover this loss in revenue.

Act 10 gave locally elected school board a greater say in employee compensation, which allowed them to balance their budgets in a difficult economic time. But if school boards are going to attract and retain the high-quality employees our students deserve and implement 21st century educational programs, they will need this flexibility along with adequate funding for our public schools.

Page -2-
3/9/15

If we want our public schools to produce graduates ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow, we need to invest in our schools today. As one school administrator put it, "You gave us tools, but we also need some lumber."

We ask for your support of public education and the future of the children we are educating. We look forward to hearing from you about your commitment to prioritize public school funding as the Legislature looks at making changes to the 2015-17 budget proposal.

Sincerely,

Dean E. Sanders, Supt. of Lake Mills
On Behalf of the Lake Mills School Board

cc: Wisconsin Association of School Boards