

WAUPUN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Challenging Minds. Inspiring Action. Prepared for Tomorrow.

January 25, 2018

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 835. I have been the District Administrator for the Waupun Area School District for the past six years. The Waupun Area School District has been and continues to be a very conservative district. It is a community that supports and values education where over 40% of our students are economically disadvantaged. In 2016, the community supported a \$36 million facilities referendum to address aging boilers, roofs, plumbing, and safety issues. They supported remodeling our traditional 1950's learning environments to classrooms where students are engaged and want to come to school. However, all of this is for nothing if we are not able to support it with a budget that supports our day-to-day operations.

Waupun's revenue limit is currently \$9293. Only 29 of the 422 school districts in the state have a lower revenue ceiling than we have. If you look at the handout of our surrounding districts, it is easy to see why the Waupun Area School District struggles to balance our budget each year while trying to offer a high quality education. Our class sizes are higher than our surrounding districts which is a reason many families decide to open-enroll out of the district. Our health benefits are the worst in the area which makes teacher recruitment next to impossible. Our health insurance deductible is \$3000 for individuals and \$6,000 for a family with no HRA or HSA contribution from the District. Why? The budget won't allow us to do anything differently.

Our ability to grow and be competitive has been limited since 1993. All I am asking for today is to be placed on a level playing field monetarily, though even with this adjustment, we will still be well below the state average of \$10,439. The low-revenue ceiling increase would mean an additional \$200,000 for our budget next year which is half of our projected deficit this year. By the 2022-2023 school year, we will still not be where our surrounding districts have been for the past 25 years, but it will definitely be a great start. Instead of cutting programs and staff, we can begin to discuss how to provide for our students' needs.

How would Waupun use this money? In year one, we would almost balance the budget. In year two, we would finally have a balanced budget. By the 2020-2021 school year, we could begin to add staff, provide competitive health insurance benefits, and retain the great teachers we have. We would not fully realize any "extra" monies until the 2021-2022 school year which at that time would allow us to offer more services and educational benefits to children and families. With the passing of this bill, in 2022 our revenue limit would be \$9800. Our surrounding districts are already well into the \$10,000 range. Even with that being said, I am excited for the possibilities for Waupun!

As you debate this bill, please know that the tax impact to our families is \$25 per year on an average home in Waupun, but it will make a world of difference to our kids. Thank you for letting me speak today, and I invite you to our district at any time!

Thank you,

Tonya L. Olson, District Administrator