



District Administrative Center

925 16th Avenue, Suite 3
Monroe, WI 53566

"Preparing for the Future, One Child at a Time"

April 5, 2019

Members of the Joint Finance Committee:

First of all, on behalf of the School District of Monroe, I would like to thank you for holding budget hearings to hear from your constituents on the 2019-2021 budget. Our district is grateful for a budget that was supportive to public education for the 2017-2019 biennium and we are hopeful that the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) will take notice from recent elections and referenda that public education is a clear priority to the public at large.

Our district is proud of the success our students have enjoyed academically, even through tough budget years. We have consistently been in the top 25% of Badger Conference school districts on our district report cards and we consistently rank in the top 20% of districts statewide in the same measures. Our district's students are achieving at high levels despite our district having to make numerous budget cuts due to declining enrollment in recent years.

It is our hope that the state will provide the financial support our schools need in order to maintain current educational programming while addressing some achievement gaps that are having a negative impact on our future, and that of the entire nation. Here are the budget priorities as viewed by our district for this biennium:

- We request an increase to the equalized aid formula allocation of \$200 per pupil for each year of the biennium. We also ask that the JFC also recommends indexing the revenue cap to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at least for this biennium, if not permanently.
- We request that the JFC supports increasing the special education reimbursement by 10% over the next two years of the biennium. That would bring the reimbursement rate to just over 35% and this would allow districts to have to transfer less money from fund 10 to fund 27 and that would allow "real budget dollars" that could be utilized by schools to address programming needs. Please note that the state reimbursed 44% of special education costs 25 years ago and the cost of mandated services has only increased. It is time that the state commits to starting to fund special education at a more reasonable rate.
- We request that the JFC continues to provide funds to help support mental health services in our schools.
- We seek the JFC's support of additional aid for English Language Learners (ELL). The cost to support students with english language deficiencies has increased and the shortage of staff in these areas often require districts to offer higher salaries to individuals with ELL certifications. As a result, any support that could be provided through the state budget would be appreciated.
- We seek relief for school districts allowing them to hire WRS annuitants for full-time positions. This offers cost savings to districts and also offers an answer to the educator

shortage. We understand that there are concerns about "double-dipping", especially with administrators; our solution to this concern is to cap the annual salary for any WRS retiree at \$70,000 per year.

We appreciate your willingness to listen to the needs of our district and other districts. We welcome any one of you to visit one or more of the schools in our district and see how your tax dollars are being put to work to provide a brighter future for our youth. We are proud of the services we provide in the School District of Monroe and we ask for your support in providing a budget that continues to allow us to move forward as a district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rick Waski".

Rick Waski
District Administrator
School District of Monroe