

April 18, 2019

Dear Distinguished Members of the Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee:

Downsville Elementary
N2681 460th Street
PO Box 78
Downsville, WI 54735
(715) 664-8546

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to share my thoughts related to the state budget, and thank you for your service to our state. My name is Joe Zydowsky, and I am the district administrator in the School District of the Menomonie Area (SDMA); a school district in western Wisconsin with approximately 3,400 students and 450 staff members in seven schools located midway between Eau Claire and the Minnesota border. Before getting into my testimony, I would especially like to thank JFC Members Darling, Olsen and Marklein, and the other members of the state legislature for their great work while serving on the Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding.

Knapp Elementary
110 South Street
Knapp, WI 54749
(715) 665-2131

I am here today to support the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission and to register my support for the governor's budget proposals related to K-12 education. While I was very encouraged by the findings of the Blue Ribbon Commission, I now request that the Joint Finance Committee find a way to adopt a budget that includes the K-12 funding levels proposed by Governor Evers.

Menomonie High School
1715 5th Street West
Menomonie, WI 54751
(715) 232-2606

The recent investments for K-12 education supported by the legislature in the past biennium are much appreciated, but it is still a critical time for public education in Wisconsin. Schools across our state have made many tremendous improvements in the rigor, relevance, and delivery of what is being taught in our schools; school buildings are safer than ever before; and we truly are providing 21st Century learning opportunities for all children. Like many school districts across the state, however, the needs of our children are changing. That, coupled with a slight increase in student enrollment in Menomonie, require the addition of several positions for the 2019-2020 school year. In the SDMA, we hope to add three new special education teachers, a new English Language Learner (ELL) teacher, and additional staffing in the areas of English, math, science, and music. If quality candidates can be hired, we will also be adding two new school counselor positions and a school social worker to respond to the mental health needs of our students. With the pool of quality teacher candidates continuing to shrink, it is critically important that the legislature remove the unnecessary restrictions on hiring retired educators so that we can fill these key positions.

Menomonie Middle School
920 21st Street South
Menomonie, WI 54751
(715) 232-1673

Oaklawn Elementary
500 21st Street South
Menomonie, WI 54751
(715) 232-3798

Without new revenue of at least \$200 per pupil for each year of the new biennium, our school district will have no choice but to reduce basic programming to fund mandated services. Funding for special education in Wisconsin continues to be inadequate, so last year, the SDMA was required to once again increase the general fund transfer for special education services to an amount that is now approaching \$4 million. With the increasing needs that we are observing in the areas of special education, ELL, and mental health, I also ask the committee to adopt the governor's funding proposals for these important areas.

River Heights Elementary
615 24th Avenue West
Menomonie, WI 54751
(715) 232-3987

Thank you again for considering my thoughts, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to hear more about how the state budget impacts the SDMA. With your support of the governor's budget proposal, we would be able to go into the new biennium without reducing programming for our kids.

Wakanda Elementary
1801 Wakanda Street NE
Menomonie, WI 54751
(715) 232-3898

Yours truly,



Joseph E. Zydowsky, PhD