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***St. Francis School District***  
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***Mr. Blake A. Peuse***  
***Superintendent***

April 10, 2019

Thank you Committee members for your time today and your efforts into this difficult process.

My name is Jonathan Mitchell and I work as the Director of Finance and Operations for the St. Francis School District.

Our Board passed a resolution in February in support of one the Blue Ribbon Commission recommendations to increase the special education reimbursement rate to 60% by the 2020-21 school year.

Currently, our District funds two-thirds of the cost of special education at the local level via a transfer from our operational budget. In our schools, the special education rate has increased 58% at grades K-8 over a 5 year period (12.3% versus 19.5%). As a result of the increased special education population, that transfer amount has increased 32% over that same period.

With the growing needs in our schools, the projected deficit will be over \$500,000 or 4% of our operational budget next year. The need of providing legally required special education programming comes into conflict with the priorities of maintaining programming for students struggling in reading and math, technology for high levels of engagement in learning and the ability to maintain our school facilities.

I have worked in school finance for 12 years and make every effort to understand the impact of each dollar we spend to ensure we are sustaining programming that is data driven and that it is benefiting students. We know the programming we have now is essential in trying to ensure that each student has the opportunity to perform at their maximum ability.

I appreciate the difficulty of weighing competing priorities in the state budget, and ask for you to think of the challenge we now face in meeting the equity needs of all students.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Mitchell  
Director of Finance and Operations  
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