



School District of Osceola

Mark Luebker Superintendent of Schools

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Board of Education
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April 15, 2019

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Mark Luebker. Over the past 8 years, I have had the privilege of serving as Superintendent of the Osceola School District. Osceola School District consistently significantly exceeds expectations on the School State Report Card. We are proud of that accomplishment, however, there is always more work to be done. That work requires time, energy, along with equity and equality of funding.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Guiding Principles states that each student has the right to learn despite differences in educational needs and backgrounds and has important implications for ensuring an equitable education for all students. In the education research literature, the term educational equality refers to the notion that all students should have access to an education of similar quality— such as funding, facilities, resources, and quality teaching and learning. (Brighthouse & Swift, 2008).

The approval of increases for low spending districts was certainly a positive example of equity and equality with bipartisan support as per ACT 141. Unfortunately additional language in ACT 141 is not. Osceola School District along with a handful of other Districts cannot access additional aid due to unsuccessful referendums. The low ceiling freeze equates to approximately \$1 million dollars of lost revenue for our District over the next three years. We are facing a \$900,000 deficit for the 2019-20 school budget. Eliminating the language to freeze low spending districts would generate approximately \$200,000 to help offset our deficit. Equity and Equality should not be tied to a zip code. Please consider removing the freeze of funding for just a few schools. A sure sign of promoting bipartisan educational equality.

Please support the work of the bipartisan Blue Ribbon Commission. Osceola's special education population is 10%. In order to provide Free Appropriate Public Education, we currently transfer \$1.4 million of general fund dollars. Increasing special education funding to 30% would provide approximately \$120,000 of additional funding. Funding special education at 60% would support educational equity.

- Provide additional per-pupil funds for mental health services.
- Restore the inflationary increase for revenue limits — \$200 per student adds \$142,000 of additional revenue for the 2019-20 school year.
- Balance local real estate taxes on schools by providing two thirds funding from the state.
- I also strongly request eliminating current restrictions of hiring retired educators. We need their help with many positions.

Respectfully,

Mark Luebker

**Home of the
Chieftains**

Osceola High School – 1111 Oak Ridge Drive – 715-294-2127
Osceola Middle School – 1029 Oak Ridge Drive – 715-294-4180
Osceola Intermediate School – 949 Education Avenue – 715-294-2800
Osceola Elementary School – 250 Tenth Avenue East – 715-294-3457
Transportation – 501 Simmon Drive – 715-294-3456
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