

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF HARTFORD JOINT NO. 1

DEDICATED TO THE SUCCESS OF EACH STUDENT

CITY OF HARTFORD, TOWNS ADDISON, ERIN, HARTFORD – WASHINGTON COUNTY • TOWNS ASHIPUN, RUBICON – DODGE COUNTY
HARTFORD, WISCONSIN 53027

April 10, 2019

Dear Members of the Joint Finance Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is John Stellmacher, and for the past eight years, I've had the privilege of serving as the Chief Financial Officer for the School District of Hartford Jt1.

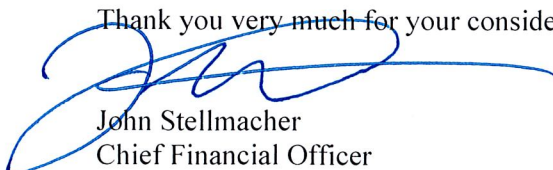
I'd like to begin by thanking you for the resources that you invested in our School District during the 2017-19 Budget and subsequent adjustment to the Low Revenue Ceiling. Those resources helped our District maintain the high level of academic instruction that our students, parents, taxpayers, and community have come to expect, and have put us in a position to be proactive and innovative.

Second, I'd like to highlight the top priorities for my District and the Hartford Community. While the 2017-19 state budget helped grow student achievement in our district, there is more work to be done. Our district routinely significantly/exceeds expectations on the DPI State Report Card, and thus our professional educators are highly sought after by other districts. With the low unemployment rate, competition for high caliber teachers, and our District legacy as a low spending and low tax district, it is a challenge to maintain the financial resources necessary to retain the staff that are helping us achieve. The \$200/\$204 per pupil in the proposed 2019-21 State of Wisconsin budget is crucial for our district's operational plan to continue to provide opportunities for our students.

Further, our community serves a significant population of students with economic disadvantages and/or special education needs. The amount of resources diverted from our general operations to fund Special Education has grown from nearly \$1.9 million to \$2.5 million over the past four years. To account for this cost, we've had to make reductions from other areas of the budget to stay in compliance with state and federal law. An increase in Special Education Categorical Aid is crucial for our District to continue serving Special Education students while not jeopardizing the educational opportunities for other students.

Finally, we ask the legislature to consider the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission that would reduce the disparity in spending authority between districts and also address the significant challenges created by declining enrollment. Declining enrollment impacts nearly 2/3 of the school districts in our state and securing financial sustainability for these schools is crucial to ensuring every child in Wisconsin has an opportunity to learn.

Thank you very much for your consideration,



John Stellmacher
Chief Financial Officer
School District of Hartford Jt1

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