

Wisconsin State Joint Finance Committee
Virtual Public Hearing Testimony
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*Birchwood School District
300 South Wilson
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Hi, I'm Bonita Basty, a retired school bookkeeper, speaking on behalf of the Birchwood School District in the Northwest part of Wisconsin and its financial challenges with the Revenue Limit formula.

We are one of 21 "zero aided" schools in the state! This means we will never see any funding increases that might be added to the State Aid Formula. Absolutely Zero! We ask you to fund increases by using Categorical Aids such as Special Education Aids, Mental Health funding, Rural Transportation, and the others that you've heard about already to support our school that averages about 57% students in poverty.

Here's a shocker, lack of state aid is not our greatest financial problem! It's actually the double standards of the Revenue Limit Formula! On one hand, our high property values keep state aid out of reach as we're told we have the means to support the added taxation. On the other hand, the calculation throttles our tax levy amount, which doesn't let us use our property values to generate funding! This year we added referendum dollars and our mil rate was still the 12th lowest in the state at 6.37 while the state average is 9.22 mils. Bordering districts have mil rates as high as 10.84 while receiving millions in state aid!

Our revenue limit has been on the decline for over 20 years now! Even with a successful referendum, our limit is expected to drop again in 3 years with a huge cliff in 5 years, dropping by 41.28%! Our referendum was a Band-Aid & Covid job losses may be a problem with passing the next one as the majority of our voters live in poverty. We simply can't survive a future referendum failure!

Three Possible Solutions to explore:

- 1) Allow zero aided districts with a mil rate well below the state average, to increase that mil rate by the CPI percentage in subsequent years.
- 2) Allow school districts to increase their prior year revenue limit by the CPI percentage. At the bare minimum, stop the bleeding by not allowing revenue limits to decline.
- 3) Bring back or add new revenue limit exemptions like the ACT 32 Energy Exemption. Perhaps exemptions for buildings and grounds maintenance, vehicle and other asset replacements, etc.

Thank you all for these listening sessions. I would love the opportunity to discuss this further.

Respectfully submitted,



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