

RIVERDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT



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Jon Schmidt, District Administrator

April 16, 2021

Dear Members of the Joint Finance Committee,

I am writing in my support of the 2021-2023 Governor's Budget. We appreciate the work that has already been put into place with the previous budget and all of the Covid relief packages that have helped students and districts navigate through this pandemic. Our biggest challenges are yet to come addressing the learning gap that has developed in students because of the pandemic. The one time federal aid is drastically needed to address our current Covid needs.

As a school superintendent we need to be better funded to sustain long term changes. Our largest resource that is needed are qualified individuals to work with our students. Staffing is our largest expense and cannot be sustained with Covid dollars. Our school district was awarded as being labeled a low spending district back in 1993. This means that we were a low revenue school district per student revenue that was capped at 9300 per student since 1993. We went through major cuts during the 2008-2012 schools years.

I urge you to please support the Governor's proposal to increase the \$200 per pupil increase in 2022 and \$204 in 2023. Raising the low revenue district's such as Riverdale, from 10,000 to 10,500 in the next two years would allow districts like us to catch up and not have to go back to the community to ask for operating referendums.

I highly support the Governor's proposal to increase special education reimbursement from 28% to 50% during the next two years. The Riverdale School District annually transfers approximately 1,000,000 from our general fund to cover the cost of special education. Our district consistently is over 20% in our special education population and have 55% of our students in free and reduced hot lunch programs.

And finally, please support the comprehensive pupil count mitigation which will allow districts to choose their pupil count from either 2019-20 or 2020-21 school year. Districts have decreased student enrollment this year due to the pandemic. Students in our district have either open enrolled into a virtual school or have opted to homeschool. The latter is the more prevalent situation in our district and the one that worries me the most. Much of our school districts funding is based on our three year membership. If changes are not made to this area, the school districts will suffer for the next three years or more. We will again be asked to educate these students when they come back but won't receive funding to do so.

Thank you for listening to our district's concern. I am in favor of all of the Governor's proposals as they are intended to support local government, public education, and small businesses. As I listened to the public hearing at the University of Whitewater I am convinced that public education is at the center of our major issues that we are addressing in this budget. Education is a long term solution to developing an educated voting based and strong community. Financial support is crucial to building and maintaining our economic place.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Schmidt
District Administrator
Riverdale School District