

## **Joint Finance Committee Hearing Testimony**

**Wednesday, April 28, 2021**

Submitted by Tanya Kotlowski, Superintendent of Necedah Area School District  
17th Senate District

*Good Afternoon, Senator Marklein and other legislators of the Joint Committee on Finance. My name is Tanya Kotlowski, and I am the school superintendent of the Necedah Area School District, located in the 17th Senate District. I want to thank you all for your hard work as you confront difficult decisions that impact millions of people in our great state. My interest today is to share a couple fiscal priorities that will most positively impact our Necedah children and school community.*

*I am proud to serve our rural district, which includes 720 PK-12 students, including a free and reduced population of over 50%, and a special needs population of over 20%; yet even with these demographics, including an aging senior population, we are also a small rural district with a high property value, given our lakefront properties, making us a negative tertiary school district.*

*Given our demographics, I want to express my support of the biennium budget to include an increase in special education funding to support children with disabilities. With a state average of 14% of students identified as disabled as compared to our over 20% identification in Necedah, our expenses to meet the federally-mandated services for our children far outweighs the aid provided to effectively serve them.*

*Each year our school district transfers an average of one million dollars to Fund 27 to support these mandated expenses. By increasing special education funding to serve some of our most vulnerable children, we can at the same time be offsetting the transfer amount which allows us to reallocate funds towards addressing the instructional needs of All children. Basically, an increase in special education funding is good for all students.*

*I also would like to advocate for an inflationary increase in general revenue. The most beneficial strategy for tax-payers in Necedah is an increase in per-pupil categorical aid. In order to sustain current programming for our children, an inflationary increase is essential. Without an increase, we will need to defray natural increases in expenses through reductions in educational services, even deeper than our budget forecast projections.*

*I appreciate your leadership as you confront the challenging fiscal priorities that are ahead of you, and hope our Necedah story can serve as a tool for increased consideration for school funding priorities.*