

Joint Finance Committee Members,

The School District of Elmbrook is located in Waukesha County and serves over 7,400 students. In order to open safely in the fall of 2020, the District invested over \$2.7M in COVID-19 related expenditures. As of April 6, 2021, the District is anticipating total ESSER funds in the amount of \$1,482,301. We are hopeful that the distribution of additional ESSER III funds will cover the remaining \$1.2M in costs as well as additional funding to help implement programs to address any learning loss that occurred during the pandemic. We opened school successfully in September after investing heavily in personal protective equipment, technology, air handling, and necessary staffing for social distancing solutions.

We are grateful for the support of these **one-time** dollars to offset these unintended expenditures, however, they are only **one-time** dollars. In order to meet the ongoing needs of the District, predictable, sustainable and long-term resources are needed. The Revenue Limit calculation determines the amount of revenue a District can generate from year to year. Unless a District is increasing in student enrollment, the only way for a District to generate additional revenue each year is for a per pupil increase on the Revenue Limit. A per pupil increase on the Revenue Limit tied to inflation would provide predictable, sustainable and consistent resources to offset inflationary expenditures. We encourage you to support \$200 per pupil in 2021, and \$204 per pupil in 2022.

District's are required to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education to all students and comply with a variety of unfunded mandates within several federal and state laws such as IDEA. Annually, the District transfers \$11.8M from our general operating fund to offset expenditures in our special education fund. Our total special education fund expenditures are \$19.2M. We currently receive \$3.4M in state special education aid under the current 28% reimbursement rate. We encourage you to support the proposed 45% special education reimbursement. Increasing the special education reimbursement rate to 45% would increase the amount of special education aid we receive by \$3.3M. This would allow \$3.3M for the District to reallocate to general education operating expenses.

While we are fortunate to serve a community that continues to support a high quality education for all students, we have not been immune to increasing mental health and economic needs of our students and families. Since last fall, we have partnered with our local food pantry to provide food security for citizens in our community. In addition, we are seeing an increase in mental health concerns within our students and families due to challenges with accessibility to high quality services in the region. We strongly support the introduction of a School Mental Health Categorical Aid to address current and future needs of our students through additional professional services and resources. Through collaborative grants to assist schools in connecting students to needed mental health services in collaboration with community partners and mental health agencies, we can meet the needs of the students and families in our community. We also support the proposal to expand access to high-speed internet services for all families across the state, including some in our District. Earlier this year we partnered with our local foundation to provide about 100 families high speed internet access which we view as a utility similar to water and electricity.

The budget building process is one of the most important responsibilities you have as a legislator. We appreciate your hard work to balance the different demands from various constituents. If we can be of any service to you during the budget process, feel free to contact me at 262.312.0596.



Mark Hansen, Superintendent for Elmbrook Schools