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May 24, 2021

Dear Joint Finance Committee,

COVID-19 has laid many challenges at our feet over the last 14 months across the State of Wisconsin. The 2021-23 biennial budget provides us with a unique opportunity to work together, collectively, to support all of the children and families in the state through the post-pandemic recovery. There is no more important of an investment in the state than our school-aged children. ***The children of today are the workforce of tomorrow. Now is the time to commit to the future of our state by substantively investing in our children's education and ultimately the future of our state.***

The first sentence in the School District of Greenfield's mission statement reads, "We believe all learning begins with meaningful relationships." This sentence has anchored the work of 486 highly committed teachers, administrators, support staff, food service workers, and custodians as they have had a laser-like focus on meeting the social, emotional, physical, and academic needs of each of the 3,445 children and their families everyday and most urgently each challenging day throughout the pandemic.

The realities of the pandemic required the School District of Greenfield to alter structures and systems and in some cases create new structures, systems and protocols designed to adhere to Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) recommendations and guidance from the Greenfield Health Department. The necessary adjustments to transportation, translation and interpretation for our families whose first language is not English, cleaning facilities and buses, indoor air quality and related energy costs, educational technology, staffing adjustments, personal protective equipment, providing a fully virtual educational option for students with underlying health conditions who could not attend school in-person, among other strategies added unplanned and extensive costs for the 2020-21 school year. The ESSER grants provide funds to offset some of these unplanned and extensive costs.

The reality of our future is that COVID-19 will continue to impact the student experience beyond when the disease is no longer detectable in the Greenfield Community. The ESSER funds are designed to support schools and districts with the necessary resources to provide a safe environment through necessary mitigation measures in the short-term as well as funds specifically focused on improving educational outcomes for students as we recover from the significant disruption to learning the pandemic has created. However, ***ESSER funds are designed for schools and districts to survive the pandemic. It is through a strong financial commitment from each of you, in this biennial budget, that our schools and districts will thrive despite the pandemic.*** ESSER funds cannot replace the critically important investment from the State of Wisconsin necessary for our schools to flourish, ensure long-term economic growth and vitality in our state, as well as community well-being for all.

As you debate the K-12 Education portion of the budget later this week, please take the School District of Greenfield's budget priorities on the following pages into consideration, as ***NOW is the time to invest in the future of the State of Wisconsin by prioritizing our children and the learning communities who passionately serve them every day.***

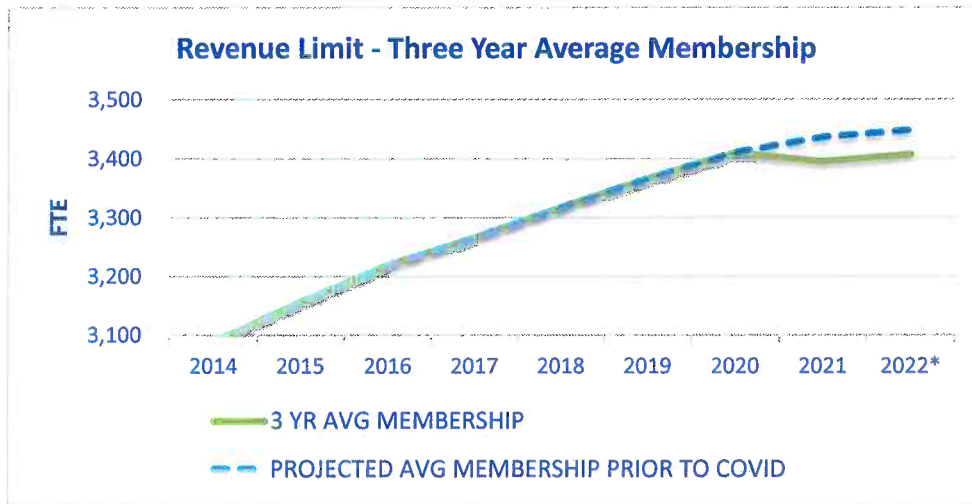
Sincerely,

Lisa Elliott  
Superintendent  
School District of Greenfield

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF GREENFIELD**  
**BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE 2021-23 BIENNIAL BUDGET**

**MEMBERSHIP CONSIDERATION**

Student membership is a key element in determining school district revenue on an annual basis. Like many other districts, Greenfield has experienced a severe decline in the 20-21 school year due to COVID19.



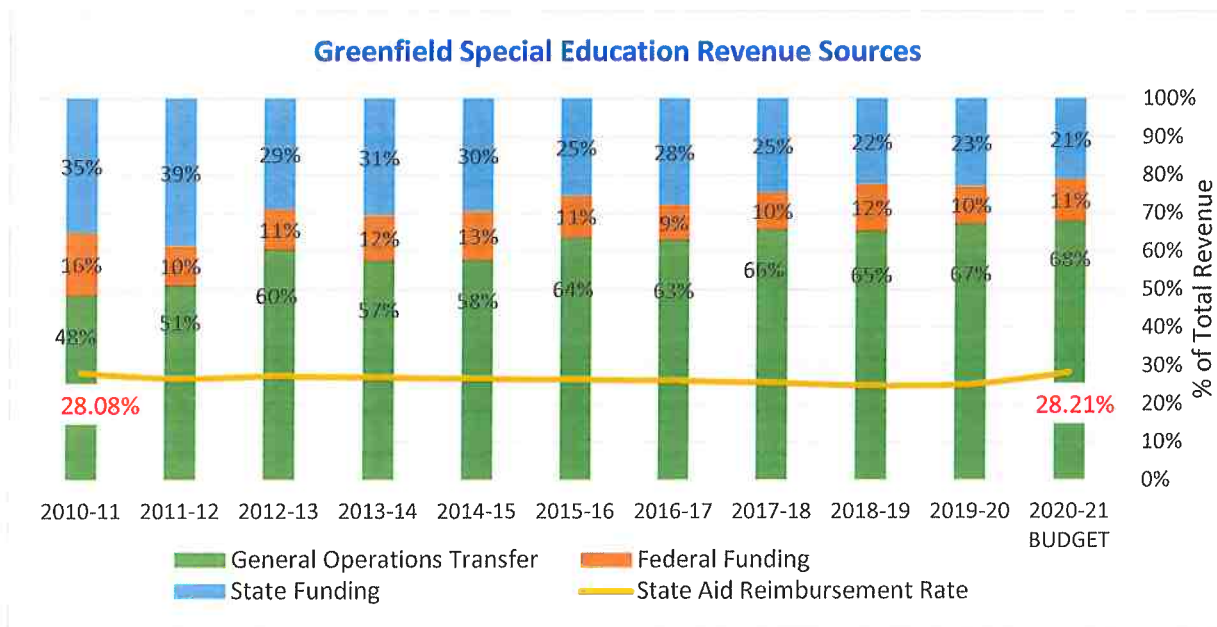
\*2022 average membership was calculated as if all students returned, which may be unlikely

**Why does it matter?** School District revenue is determined by using the 3-year average of student membership. Greenfield experienced a drop of approximately \$400,000 in funding in 20-21 due to the sharp decline in enrollment compared to a normal year. This decline will carry forward with an impact to future budgets during a time when Greenfield has needed more staff and resources to mitigate the effect of the pandemic.

**What can help?** Allow districts to use the greater of the 2019-20 or 2020-21 pupil count for revenue limit calculations and treat the non-recurring declining enrollment exemption and base revenue hold harmless as recurring adjustments for one year only.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION AID CONSIDERATION**

As special education costs continue to increase every year, the special education categorical aid reimbursement has remained relatively flat. This has forced the District to transfer more funds away from general instruction and facilities maintenance each year to cover the gap in funding.



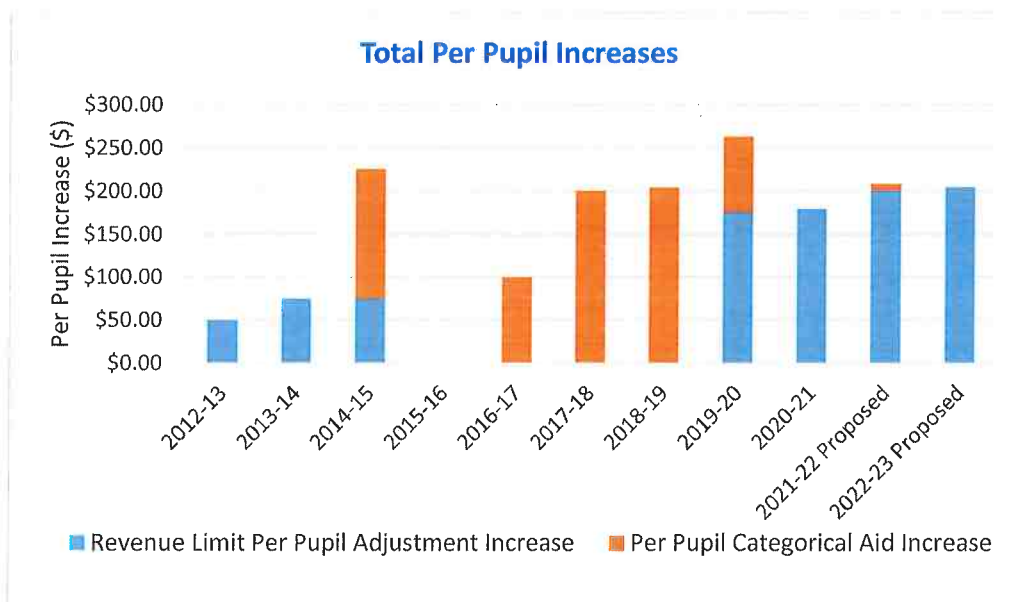
## SPECIAL EDUCATION AID CONSIDERATION (continued)

**Why does it matter?** As shown above, the total percentage of expenditures covered by the state continues to decrease, forcing the District to contribute more and more away from general operations (Fund 10) to cover additional special education costs (Fund 27). The reimbursement rate was 28.08% in 2010-11 and remains at 28.21% ten years later, resulting in District contributions rising from 48% to 68% since 2010-11.

**What can help?** Support the biennial budget proposal to increase the special education categorical aid reimbursement to 45% in 21-22 and 50% in 22-23.

## REVENUE LIMIT PPA AND PER PUPIL AID ADJUSTMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Per-pupil increases within the Revenue Limit or from Per Pupil Categorical Aid are a key factor in offering our staff **adequate and sustainable** pay and benefit increases every year. Below are the total increases each year from the two funding streams.



**Why does it matter?** The proposed increases as shown above for the 21-22 and 22-23 biennial budget would be comparable to recent year increases. Those increases allowed our District to provide CPI increases in recent years for most of our staff; however, has left little to no funding for other resources and inflationary costs, forcing us to make other cuts on an annual basis.

**What can help?** Support the biennial budget proposed increases, if not more, to help ensure appropriate educational resources and quality staff for school districts over the two-year state budget and into the future.

## CONSIDERATION FOR COUNTING PUPILS FOR FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN (4K) AS 1.0 FTE

In 2018-19, the District implemented a full-time 4K Program. Despite lower funding than other grade levels, evidence supports the positive educational impact for children, making the implementation of 4K programs well worth the effort.

**Why does it matter?** Current law only permits 4K students to be counted as a .6FTE in the funding formula regardless of whether the program is operated as part-day or full-day. This results in lower funding to operate full-time 4K programs. While operating 4K may be different, the cost involved to hire qualified teachers, support staff, and educational resources are the same as any other grade level.

**What can help?** Allow school districts to count 4K students enrolled in a full-day, five days a week, program as a 1.0 FTE in the state funding formula.

## COVID19 CONSIDERATIONS

Greenfield has received over \$6million in funding from ESSER I, ESSER II, and ESSER III. These funds have helped fund both fully virtual and face-to-face learning options offered by the District during the pandemic. Without this funding the District would have seen significant deficits. Nearly \$2million has been expended in 2020-21. Our District has already created detailed plans to utilize the remaining grant funds to accommodate the continued costs of mitigation, to provide additional positions to support learning gaps and equitable access, to provide mental health supports, and the additional costs for 1:1 devices and supportive technology.

**Why does it matter?** We are thankful for the additional funding from the federal government. However, it is important to remember that these grants are supporting the extraordinary *additional* costs needed to recover from the pandemic. Maintaining operations, and supporting staff and programs we already have in place, will be difficult without continued support from the state as well.

**What can help?** Your support of these legislative priorities will allow schools to provide high-quality learning opportunities for *all* students. It will help us maintain facilities, support families and our community, and will help to attract and retain talented staff. These are continuous needs that will remain long after the pandemic runs its course.