



State Senator Eric Wimberger
Room 104 South
State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

May 19, 2021

Dear Senator Wimberger:

We represent the Marinette School District administrative team. Your willingness to listen to our thoughts on state matters that affect public education in the state of Wisconsin is appreciated. We share this communication to provide details with our COVID-19 efforts. The pandemic has impacted public schools creating unique challenges for ensuring high quality instruction for every student. Marinette School District has risen to meet the challenge through best practice, innovation, and adapting to meet the changing needs of our students and the expectations of our community.

All Marinette School District Schools have offered a face to face learning option as well as a distance learning option since the first day of the 2020-2021 school year. We heard the clear expectation from our community to offer a dual choice to families for the current school year. The district leadership team collaborated with outside resources to design and implement a safe face to face learning environment.

Mitigation strategies are necessary to keep students and staff safe. These strategies have necessitated higher spending during the 2020-2021 school year than our normal operational budget typically allows. Physical distancing has reduced the capacity of classrooms and required additional staff to facilitate smaller classes. We have also hired additional staff to facilitate distance learning as returning teaching staff were needed to facilitate face to face learning. In addition to instructional staff, we've increased spending on technology, cleaning services, disinfecting supplies, utilities, education assistant supervision, and personal protective equipment. Marinette School District is spending roughly an additional \$650,000 dollars to safely provide instruction for our students.

While the pandemic has impacted nearly every aspect of our society, we are optimistic that life for our children and our community will begin to normalize as we approach the 2021-2022 school year. We are planning for many mitigation measures to remain in place. Covid-19 ESSER funds have been helpful, but these funds are a one time allocation to cover one time Covid-19 related costs. These do not provide sustainable funding to ongoing operational costs. Marinette School District has also postponed maintenance endeavors to secure the resources to safely operate in 2020-2021.

Marinette School District faces the same challenges that were present prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Each year, our costs for attracting quality staff rise with inflation as do our costs for employee benefits, utilities, transportation, operational supplies, and maintenance. Included in the District's expenditures is \$590,000 associated with payments that will be made to private schools for students who have never attended Marinette School District schools. The District requires inflationary increases in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 to continue

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Garfield Elementary School
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to provide high quality face to face instruction for our students. The proposal for at least a \$200 per pupil general revenue increase in each year of the biennium is key to fiscal sustainability. Marinette School District is locked into being one of the lowest spending in the state at \$10,000 per member, 87.3 percent of the current state average revenue limit of \$11,450 per member. Setting the low revenue ceiling (LRC) at 90 percent of the statewide average maximum revenue limit per student is an important part of ensuring equitable resources for all children no matter where they live.

The cost of providing face to face instruction for students who have special needs (Free and Appropriate Education), as required by Federal law, continues to rise. The State reimburses public schools just a portion of these costs—28% in 2020-2021. This year the District will transfer \$2,643,402 from its General Fund to offset the cost of providing special education services for students with disabilities. The increasing expenses associated with special education programming in public schools will continue to affect resources available to all students. We strongly support the Governor's proposal to increase the level of special education aid to reimburse 50 percent of aidable costs by the end of the 2021-23 biennium.

Wisconsin School Districts need annual revenue growth in spendable resources in order to maintain facilities, retain staff, and provide safe face to face educational programs. We ask our Senators and State Representatives in the State Legislature to advocate for increased per pupil funding and special education reimbursement to assist in mitigating the impacts from the pandemic. Please feel free to share with others as you see fit or reach out to us if you have questions.

Yours in Education,



Corry Lambie
Superintendent



Tom Tiekler
Facilities Director



Sean Kelly
Finance Director



Brian Sutton
Student Services Director



Wendy Dzurick
Quality Assurance Director



Hannah Kuehnl
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