

# Parkview School District



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May 18, 2021

Dear Senator Ringhand:

I hope this letter finds you, your family, and your colleagues well. I thank each of you for the difficult task of reviewing and recommending the 2021-23 biennium budget.

I am the superintendent for the Parkview School District located in south central Wisconsin. The purpose of my letter is to support Governor Tony Evers' biennium budget proposal. While there are many competing interests for a limited pool of revenue, there can be no greater investment than in Wisconsin's students.

With the exception of having to pivot to virtual learning for two weeks in September at Parkview Jr. High/High School and one week in December at Parkview Elementary School, the Parkview School District has been providing in-person instruction for the entire 2020-21 school year. This feat has not come without its challenges, but my Board, staff and community are fully invested in ensuring the best possible learning for our students. To continue providing this high level of learning, Parkview requests that the JFC recommend sufficient revenue to fund our curriculum, staff and facilities.

The Federal Government has provided one time economic support to cover COVID-19 related expenses which were required to get Parkview through this trying period. Below are just a few examples of COVID-19 expenses that are absorbing a considerable amount of the Federal ESSER funds:

- \$120,000 for two year-long substitutes to fill vacancies due to COVID-19 staff absences
- \$47,000 for cleaning supplies, Plexiglass shields, PPE, signage and other COVID-19 supplies
- \$45,000 for virtual curriculum for the 20% of families that elected virtual instruction
- \$21,580 for an air filtration purifying system (Fresh-Aire UV) that destroys COVID-19 in the HVAC system
- \$14,000 for wifi hotspot accessibility for families who don't have internet access

To date Parkview has spent \$380,100 of the one-time ESSER funds and many of these costs, such as the year-long substitutes, will continue next year. Additionally, a minimum of 20% of the ESSER III funds will be spent to eliminate learning disruption. This investment is money well spent, but it eliminates the possibility that these funds could supplant state aid. I urge you to keep this in mind when developing the new biennium budget that ESSER funds won't be available to pay on-going expenses such as special education costs, staffing or mental health support for students. School districts like Parkview are still in need of revenue to heighten achievement for all students.

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**Parkview Jr./Sr. High School**  
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**Pupil Services**  
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I ask for support from the JFC in the following areas.

Special Education Aid Reimbursement - Parkview strongly supports 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. Parkview's total Fund 10 budget is about \$10 million. Last year Parkview transferred \$900,000 to Fund 27 to cover special education costs. This transfer amount is very similar to each of the preceding five years and is hampering the District's efforts to reduce achievement gaps and accelerate student growth. This annual transfer is one of the major reasons Parkview has to ask taxpayers to support an operational referendum every three years. Eliminating this Fund 27 transfer would significantly reduce Parkview's need to seek another operational referendum.

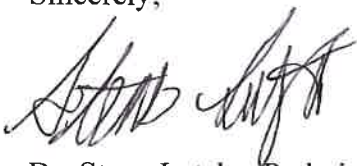
General Revenue Increase - Parkview fully supports a \$200.00 per pupil general revenue increase in each year of the biennium. A \$200.00 per student increase will help with the rising costs. For example, Parkview's transportation cost for the next six years is fixed at a 4.5% increase, equivalent to about \$80,000 per year. Additionally, salary and benefits for employees increase approximately 1-2 % per year which adds approximately \$100,000 to Parkview's expenditures. Replacing the curriculum and teaching materials for one subject in a district like Parkview cost between \$100,000-\$150,000 per year. Couple these rising costs with the huge Fund 27 transfer and it makes it next to impossible to maintain current district programs, not to mention keep up with the cost of maintaining buildings and grounds. This again leads to the need to ask taxpayers to support bonds to maintain facilities.

Mental Health Funding - Parkview fully supports the Governor's \$46.5 million expansion of School Mental Health Categorical Aid Program. The mental health needs of rural students are ever increasing. Research conducted by the Milwaukee Journal in 2017 found the Rock County falls into the highest tier for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). Mental health issues are very evident in Parkview schools and we are unable to meet the students' needs with our two counselors and one social worker. We are burning out our student support staff and need additional revenue to help our students. Without support, the problem is going to continue to balloon further out of control. Mental health issues manifest themselves in lower academic achievement, increased absences/truancy and additional discipline issues.

Expansion to Sparsity Aid - Parkview fully supports the Governors Sparsity Aid proposal that fully funds the \$400 per pupil payments for districts with 745 or fewer students and provides \$100 per pupil for districts that meet the sparsity formula and are over 746 students. This proposal would mean an additional \$84,000 to Parkview annually which would fund the 4.5% increase to our student transportation costs.

I respectfully request that the Joint Finance Committee provide Parkview and all public school districts with the funds necessary to give Wisconsin students and families the quality education they deserve.

Sincerely,



Dr. Steve Lutzke, Parkview School District Superintendent