

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm a locally elected official, finishing my eleventh year of service on the Monona Grove School Board.

After years of budget reductions, which included increasing high school class sizes among the wide range of cuts, our Board was out of choices without having to cut programs for students. In addition, our list of deferred maintenance projects had grown, and we were falling behind in some areas of curriculum and technology. In 2016, we sought voter approval to exceed our revenue limit by \$2.6 million per year for five years, in order to maintain existing programs, provide some needed upgrades, make our teachers' salaries more competitive, and increase our annual capital maintenance budget. Fortunately, they approved.

We're lucky to have committed citizens who've been willing and able to fill the funding gap between needs and state aid. Our community, including senior citizens, many of whom raised their own kids in the District, have stepped up to pay it forward despite living on fixed incomes.

One expects to go to referendum in order to build a new school. However, we should not have to budget for annual operations by referenda. In spite of the fact that many districts have had to resort to this, not all are able to do so, and it just isn't right. Clearly, we need the increases in equalized aid and revenue limits included in Governor Evers's budget proposal. Additionally, appropriate reimbursement for special education costs is a moral imperative and would make a significant positive difference.

At Monona Grove, we transferred just over \$4.2 million dollars from our General Fund 10 to our Special Education Fund 27 in 2017-18 to cover special education costs. This is just over 10% of our Fund 10 total and amounts to more than one and a half times the amount we've had to collect in additional property taxes as approved by referendum. In fact, more than two thirds of the school districts in the state now spend 10% or more of their general fund resources that would otherwise serve the entire student population on special education.

For 2018-19, the estimated level of state reimbursement for special education costs has fallen to below 25% of actual expenditures, down from 70% in 1973, and is now one of the lowest state reimbursement amounts in the nation. Frankly, this is a disgrace.

The commitment to fund the education of our children with special needs is a bipartisan issue. Both Republicans and Democrats on the State Legislature's Blue Ribbon Commission agreed on the need to increase special education reimbursement levels, as Gov. Evers has proposed.

I urge you to include in this budget *at least* the increased levels of reimbursement for special education costs proposed by Gov. Evers – to 30% of actual costs in 2019-20 and 60% in 2020-21.