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April 24, 2019

Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Finance:

We are members of the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education. We would like to share the financial challenges facing our District and top priorities as you work through the budget process. We appreciate your commitment and support for a strong education system in our community.

**Revenue Limit Adjustment**—Our top priority is to provide a revenue limit adjustment of **\$200 per revenue limit member in 2019-20 and \$204 in 2020-21**. Even with this adjustment in 2019-20, we will need to find an additional \$300,000 to balance our budget. Our situation forces difficult trade-offs. In our budget planning framework this year, we must decrease dollars allocated for high-performing staff, postpone purchases of needed physical education and music equipment, and most significantly, decrease our contribution to OPEB, which we are 2 ½ years away from fully funding.

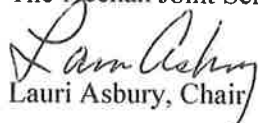
**Special Education Funding**—Our second priority is additional funding for special education. In our District, expenses for special education have risen steadily, but reimbursement from the state has not kept pace. In fact, since 2006 the *rate* of reimbursement has *decreased* steadily. We anticipate it will fall to an all-time low of 24.5% in 2018-19, forcing us to make even larger transfers from our Fund 10 general operating fund. We request that you follow the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendation to increase funding for Special Education School Aged Parents (SAP) aid to **at least 30% in 2019-20**, consider a **modest increase above 30% in 2020-21**, and change the reimbursement from sum certain to sum sufficient going forward.

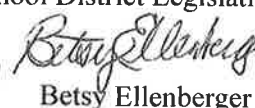
**Mental Health Funding**—Mental health funding is the third highest priority for our District. According to the 2017 Office of Children's Mental Health Annual Report, Wisconsin ranks 42nd in the nation for youth mental health. Knowing this, we have committed to providing mental health programming in our District, and we are on the forefront in having a Mental Health Coordinator on staff, conducting wellness screenings for students in grades K-12, and offering training to our students and staff. Early intervention and support allow us to identify at-risk children and provide mental health services that will not only help them graduate and succeed in their lives, but also reduce the need for greater investment after secondary school. A source of recurring funds, such as **\$25 per student in categorical aid** as proposed by the Blue Ribbon Commission, rather than competitive grants, will ensure that these highly effective programs are sustainable.

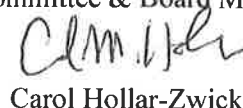
Please contact us if we can offer additional information. Thank you for your service to the great state of Wisconsin.

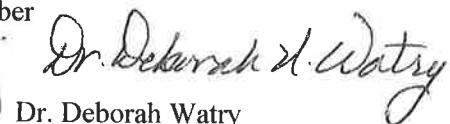
Best regards,

The Neenah Joint School District Legislative Committee & Board Member

  
Lauri Asbury, Chair

  
Betsy Ellenberger

  
Carol Hollar-Zwick

  
Dr. Deborah Watry