

Members of the Legislative Joint Finance Committee:

Welcome to Brillion! My name is Dominick Madison and I am the Superintendent of the Brillion Public School District. We are happy that you have come to our town to hold this hearing. We appreciate your willingness to hold this hearing here. While this day will be one of disagreement, debate, and expression, at its core this hearing is an expression of the concept of democracy, a concept which we can all support, all agree, all treasure, and all hold in esteem. Thank you for this opportunity and thank you for your presence here today as your presence demonstrates your commitment to Abraham Lincoln's ideal of government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

This auditorium we are sitting in represents many of the great things of our small town of Brillion. This auditorium was built as a result of a nearly \$3 million dollar donation by the Endries family. Bob Endries was a self made industrialist who saw the value of public education in his community. This community has a history of private industrialists who have gone out of there way to support the work of this public school. The Ariens company, currently under the fourth generation leadership of Dan Ariens, built the Ariens Technology and Engineering Education Center at a cost of over \$2 million. The foundation of R.D. Peters, who owned the Brillion iron Works for decades, donates nearly \$200,000 a year in scholarships to Brillion High School graduates. We are a community of successful industry, agriculture, and business. And the success of business in Brillion was built on the hard working people of this town and surrounding countryside. Strong and successful individuals and a hard-working community

And we all know that hard work alone is no longer enough. An effective workforce is critical for success. And an effective public education system is critical for an effective workforce. As we look at the budget I would ask that the finance committee consider the impact this budget would have on public education. As the budget will cut school funding in Brillion by over \$130,000, the impact would be program cuts. We would not be able to provide the same service to our district students as we have. We have wrung all we can out of our staff salary and benefits with the tools we have given us. At some point we have to consider that cutting people's pay and benefits is not sustainable. When we cannot cover inflationary raises for our staff, retaining quality people becomes a serious issue. It is critical for the economic vitality of this state to ensure that all students in Wisconsin have a quality instructional setting and not just those student who live in communities that will provide the most money. We cannot allow a student's zip code to be the primary driver of that student's quality of education. The cuts this budget makes to public education will be felt everywhere but the long term cuts will be felt more in some areas than others. I urge you to adequately fund one system of education before you fund a second.

The expansion of statewide vouchers is the creation of a second state funded education system. If we cannot fund one system adequately. I urge you to consider the wisdom of

funding a second system with no provision to ensure that it follows the same rules as the current public education system.

We cannot grow our economy without an education system that is successful. The building you are sitting in is not only a symbol of support for the public education system, it is a real reminder that the public sector and the private sector need not be rivals, but must be partners.

What we do in school matters. It is where citizens learn the core concepts of our democratic values. It is where we learn who others are. It is where we learn how to come together for the common good. We do not exclude. We include. All children can get a great education right here. And when that public system works well, private industry benefits by having a quality workforce. And democracy benefits because, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, "liberty can never be safe but in the hands of the people themselves" and "it is in the hands of the people to set things right."

Thank you for your contributions. Thank you for your service. And thank you for listening.