

March 18, 2015

Good Morning,

My name is Rebecca Kurzynske. As a member of the Oconto Falls Public School District Board of Education, I urge you amend Governor Walker's proposed biennial budget to provide for fair and appropriate funding for public education. While the Governor stated that his proposal held funding for education at a "flat" rate, his proposal would have a significant negative impact on the budgets of public school districts. Given the proposed \$150 per student aid cut, the freeze in revenue limit, and declining enrollment, the Oconto Falls School District would have a net impact of a loss of \$450,758.

We cannot ask our employees to again carry the burden of lack of state support and feel that we need to give our employees a CPI increase of 1.62% which would add another \$185,000 to the funding gap. Additionally, we have worked very hard to control health insurance costs and secured a 2% increase for next year resulting in an additional \$70,000 to add to the shortfall.

It is impossible to maintain our current level of service if we need to make nearly three quarters of a million dollars of cuts on a 19 million dollar general fund budget. This is a reduction of 2.4% when we have already implemented significant cuts in the years since Act 10 was enacted.

Last year we asked our voters and received the authority to exceed the revenue limits for technology and the resources to hire quality teachers. With this budget, half of that additional authority will be needed just to keep us even with where we were when we started this past year.

At this point, none of the options for realizing such significant budget reductions will have a direct impact on our students. Some things that may be considered are fewer school days, replacing our retiring superintendent, who is also responsible for the duties of the curriculum director who was not replaced upon retirement due to budget concerns, with a part-time administrator, increasing elementary class sizes in order to reduce staff, eliminate a foreign language at the middle school level, discontinue participation in the TRITON distance learning network which provides educational opportunities beyond those that we can support with our current staff, eliminating a high school math position which serves to support students and teachers in math education, suspend further implementation of our 1:1 technology program, or discontinuing the replacement of aging buses in our school fleet.

As I stated earlier, none of these are good ideas for our students! Our students need as much instructional time as we can provide. Given the many hats worn by our superintendent, our district needs the leadership of a full-time administrator. Our

students learning needs are best met in reasonable class sizes. In a global economy, our middle school students need exposure to multiple world languages. Given the staffing restrictions of rural schools, the TRITON distance learning network provides opportunities for our students that we cannot provide without participation in this program. Our students are learning math at a more indepth level than ever before but they need the support of additional learning opportunities outside their scheduled class time. In a world of ever increasing technology, it would be absurd to discontinue the implementation of the 1:1 technology program. With a fleet of over 30 buses, we cannot afford to discontinue the practice of replacing aging buses - our students need safe and reliable transportation to and from school.

Speaking of buses, the proposed budget does provide some additional reimbursement for transportation costs of students traveling more than 12 miles. This increase, already included in the numbers mentioned earlier, result in enough of an increase to fund new tires for 3 buses. Certainly not enough of an increase to provide much relief for rural districts.

The fat has been trimmed, the remaining budget reduction measures cut to the core of the educational experience that we provide for our students and our community! Is this worth a \$5 reduction in property taxes? I would argue that it is not! Our students are our future and are worth significantly more than a pittance of a reduction in property taxes.

We must do better for our children. We must do better for the future of the State of Wisconsin by funding public education. Our students deserve a great education. We have outstanding educators who work tirelessly to provide incredible learning opportunities and environments for our students. I urge you to consider the impact that the proposed budget will have on our students and the institution of public education. Thank your for your service to our state and for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you today.



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