

Good morning Chairman Thiesfeldt and Committee members. My name is Joe Leschisin and I am currently the District Administrator for the Cameron School District. I started in Cameron 20 years ago and served as the High School Principal for 13 years and am now in my 7th year as the District Administrator. Cameron is a small district approximately 45 minutes north of Eau Claire and serves approximately 1150 students. Unlike many rural districts, Cameron has shown a growth in enrollment of 30% over the past fifteen years. The Cameron Community is proud of the fact that nearly 25% of our students come to us via open-enrollment, we have an excellent reputation in working with our children and families, and arguably have one of the best staff retention rates in the state.

Cameron can also boast of some of the nicest and best maintained facilities in our area, but we've had to make it all work through extreme fiscal conservatism as our District has been among the lowest in the state in the allowable per pupil revenue on the State's Revenue Limit Formula. Cameron has been frugal in its spending for many years and did so by choice prior to Revenue Limits going in place. Since that time, our District has had no other choice in terms of our spending. Simply put, we have had to work with less as compared to many other districts across the state.

Our District was very fortunate in 2013 to pass a \$23.5 million building referendum. Most of the cost of this was to replace our former elementary school. It's worth noting that the main portion of this elementary school was built in 1906 and was used for classrooms all the way through the 2014-15 school year. While our District was able to attend to many facility needs through this referendum, we were not able to attend to them all. We left our high school that was built in 1979 with a rather antiquated HVAC system, subpar windows and doors and a 20-year-old middle school with lingering roof needs.

With the continued decline in our local taxes as well as the continued facility and maintenance needs, our school board opted to utilize the Energy Exemption process. As a result, we were able to attend to our some of our HVAC needs, we have converted our District to nearly 100% LED lighting systems, and we were able to make updates to some of our plumbing fixtures. Our projects were all discussed at open school board meetings over months of time. We had open dialogue with our community members about the needs as well as the Energy Exemption process. Everything was done with clarity to the public and in the best interests of our facilities and school district.

Spending millions of dollars on infrastructure without a method to maintain it annually is fiscally irresponsible. School districts that have no other option than to cut corners on standard maintenance in order to spend money on boilers or school buses eventually find themselves with much greater needs.

Our District is already having discussions about how we might fund a new roof for our middle school as well as potential upgrades to our heating and ventilation for our 40-year-old high school. Packaging every project one can think of into a much larger referendum does not make fiscal sense. Our plan is to fix and upgrade when needed, not when there is a referendum. If we can get five more years out of our middle school roof, we will. However, if we are faced with having to have a referendum now, we would have to consider it now. For a District with a 16% fund balance that relies often on short-term borrowing to make payroll, our options are limited.

I am happy to answer any questions if there are any. Thank you for your time.