

Cambria-Friesland School District

"Home of the Hilltoppers"

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Timothy L. Raymond Ed.S. District Administrator Cambria-Friesland School District

On behalf of the School District of Cambria-Friesland, thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

My name is Timothy Raymond, and I have the privilege to serve as the District Administrator of Cambria-Friesland Schools. The state of Wisconsin historically has had the honor to be recognized as a leader around the nation in public education and student achievement. With that foundation, I respectfully ask that you consider support of the Governor's budget before you particularly as it applies to public education.

Cambria-Friesland is a small rural district located approximately forty-five miles from our state capital. A tour through our district offers a glimpse of some of the natural wonders only Wisconsin has to offer. In that drive you'd also see the homes and residences of the three-hundred and fifty students who walk through our doors every morning. These dwellings are humble and reflect the 50% of our students who qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Some have scoffed at the 120 seconds or two minutes we've been allowed to voice our support or concerns for the governor's budget. As a former wrestler and wrestling coach I understand the power of 120 seconds and appreciate the time you've allotted which is more than enough for all of us to speak here today.

Let us begin:

Whether virtual, hybrid, or in person learning, the one-time federal dollars for COVID-19 relief greatly mitigated the expenses every school district endured in order to provide a quality education for their students. Let me make it clear that without those dollars Cambria-Friesland Schools could not have provided in person learning five days a week from September 1, 2020 to today. Those monies have directly supported:

- Online technology and educational programming for students and families who elected to remain at home but still enrolled in school throughout the pandemic.
- Internet services for 60 families.
- Cleaning agents, PPE, and tools never needed before this year that are now part of daily cleaning protocols.
- Increased onsite nurse to 2 days/week.
- Substitute teaching and staff. Throughout the pandemic CF Schools have employed a small army of substitute teachers. Without these people we would not have remained opened throughout the year.

Along these lines I implore you to support the governor's proposal for a pupil count adjustment. This would allow schools to:

- use the greater of the 2019-20 or 2020-21 pupil count for revenue limit calculations
- increase special adjustment aid from 85 percent to 90 percent of prior year general aid in each year of the biennium

- treat the non-recurring declining enrollment exemption and base revenue hold harmless as recurring adjustments for one year only.

I would like to express our strong support for the Governor's proposal to increase the level of special education aid to reimburse 50 percent of aidable costs by the end of the 2021-23 biennium. Annually, our district shifts approximately \$500 - \$600,000 dollars from fund 10 to fund 27 to cover our special education costs. Public schools serve all students and meet them where they are in order to deliver a quality education. These students often have cognitive and physical disabilities that require special attention and resources. From brain trauma to feeding tubes, our students come to us with challenges that must be overcome to best serve their academic, social, and emotional needs. That adjustment in greater funding for special education will make a positive difference for all students.

In closing there are many areas of the governor's budget regarding public education that deserve your support and vote. From the return to two-thirds funding as established in 1993 under then Governor Thompson, to the \$200 per pupil general revenue increase each year of the biennium to the expansion of categorical funding for mental health services. All first steps in addressing the underfunded needs of pupil schools and the 819,000 students we serve everyday.

819,000 students attend Wisconsin public schools. Over the past decade these students have been marginalized as Wisconsin tax dollars have been siphoned from public schools and placed in the coffers of private and parochial schools. The governor's budget in its current form is the first step in reconciliation. The case has been laid out very carefully by private and parochial advocates that the expansion of vouchers provides a "choice" for families as well as an opportunity for a "better educational experience". Both of these premises are much more political talking points rather than evidence based research. The governor's budget is a tool that addresses the need for equity in education.

Cambria-Friesland Schools survive only because our local taxpayers have decided their children deserve a quality education and quality school. This past Tuesday, our district passed a non-recurring referendum to exceed the revenue limit for \$5,000,000. Without a successful vote, the district would be forced to cut \$1.4 million in the 2021-2022 school year. Please know our district's small rural school like many others around the state have a budget of approximately \$5.5 million dollars. It's long overdue the state of Wisconsin returns to its historic roots in supporting public education and ensures every child no matter their zip code receives the education they deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Timothy L. Raymond Ed.S.