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May 26, 2021

Dear Senator Ballweg,

Thank you so much for meeting with a group of Columbia County Superintendents on Tuesday, May 25. We know how busy you are so we really appreciate that you took the time to meet with us in person via Zoom. I just wanted to follow up that conversation reiterating what I spoke to on our Zoom call.

The School District of Lodi has approximately 1500 students and I am writing to reiterate my support for proposed K-12 biennial budget initiatives, which if approved, have great potential to positively impact the education of the School District of Lodi students.

As you and your colleagues continue to build and develop the K-12 education funding plan for the state budget, I am asking that you please support a state budget proposal to boost state aid and spendable resources to school districts, which include:

- **Revenue Limit Increase:** Allowing increases of \$200 in 2021-22 and \$204 in 2022-23 in per pupil revenue limit. Lodi has realized declining enrollment in the past several years and has used taxpayer dollars appropriately to support educational initiatives. However, with low per pupil spending and increased needs, we need your help to maintain the high quality education which the students of Lodi deserve. Costs continue to rise, but revenues have not been able to keep pace with escalating costs.
- **Special Education Funding:** It is crucial that Lodi sees an increase in Special Education funding in the next two years. Serving students with special needs is critical and our schools are continuing to see increases in this area. Like all public schools, Lodi is obligated to provide a “Free and Appropriate Public Education” (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). This is often resource heavy. We need help with resources from state officials such as yourself to help maintain required and necessary initiatives to serve these students. Last year, the School District of Lodi transferred \$2.4 million to our General Fund to cover the costs of students with special needs.
- **Pupil Count Mitigation:** Last year, the School District of Lodi lost 30 students to pandemic related concerns. That decline in enrollment will have a lasting impact on Lodi’s forthcoming revenue stream. While we hope and expect those students to return to Lodi schools, we expect lost revenue of approximately \$250,000 over the next two years if nothing is changed in this area.
- **Social/Emotional Learning Needs:** We continue to see growing needs of students with social and emotional learning needs. While we have taken the steps to train staff and provide resources to programming for these students, there is still great need and the financial resources continue to

be limited. Providing a long-term solution to help students in this population needs to be addressed. In our rural districts, access to mental health professionals is often limited. We've had to establish relationships with contractors to provide the necessary resources to serve students with social and emotional needs. The demand is high and if our state budgets won't provide resources for these needs, we will be forced to allocate funds from other areas of our budget, creating a limitation in other areas leading to potential further reductions to other K-12 programs.

I also appreciate the understanding and knowledge you showed around the CARES and ESSER funding that school districts have received, or are set to receive, from the federal government. As you discussed yesterday, you understand that this money was to help offset the large costs the district took on in dealing with the pandemic and the significant additional costs we will continue to have moving forward as we move into next year (especially addressing students' social/emotional needs and learning loss). You indicated a strong understanding that this additional funding from the federal government was not intended to supplant the responsibility of the State in funding schools. I am thankful that the Senator representing our District has this knowledge and look forward to hearing your voice on this issue with your colleagues from both sides of the aisle.

Please let me know if you have any other questions or need more information from me regarding any of these areas. I appreciate your willingness to work with your colleagues to ensure that the public is truly a priority for the state. Thank you for your support for the students and families of the School District of Lodi.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vince Breunig".

Vince Breunig, District Administrator  
School District of Lodi  
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