



May 26, 2021

Senator Dan Feyen

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608-266-5300

Representative Michael Schraa

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Dear Rep. Schraa & Sen. Feyen,

Thank you for your service and leadership to the people of the State of Wisconsin. We understand the importance of your work and the challenges you face in developing a biennial budget that addresses the needs and priorities of a diverse state. As a school district that receives a high level of support from the State of Wisconsin, your decisions are critical to our operations and ability to meet the needs of our students and community. We know a significant portion of state funding along with support from local property taxes fund our PreK through 12 education.

As you continue the state budget process, we want to share with you our district's planning in meeting the needs of students and families. The pandemic has posed significant challenges for our efforts to meet our students' educational needs. Initially we made the abrupt switch to virtual instruction for the final quarter of the 2019-2020 school year and summer school. For the 2020-21 school year, the School District of Omro has been able to have students learning in our schools with face-to-face instruction while giving parents an option to utilize remote learning for their children. We feel fortunate to have received the one-time influx of dollars provided by the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding to support our efforts in meeting the needs of our students during the pandemic, and to help students recover from the interruption to their learning that was caused by the pandemic. The original funding we received last summer from ESSER was spent on technology and internet access for students, PPE, health and safety supplies and protocol implementation, staff training and transportation cost increases due to safety protocols.

The remainder of our ESSER II funding and all of our ESSER III funding will be spent over the next three years on addressing pandemic-related learning loss and enhanced COVID mitigation efforts. Please note that our one-time ESSER funding plans are aligned with how the Federal government intended it to be spent, which is to address the interruption to student learning caused by the global pandemic.

The pandemic did not change the budget challenges we continue to face each year in our day-to-day operations. The challenges we face with inflationary increases to health insurance, transportation, utilities, technology, operational costs, along with our desire to provide minimal compensation increases for our employees, result in a budget that cannot be balanced without an annual increase in revenue.

We are developing our budget for the 2021-2022 school year and are looking forward to collaborating with legislators regarding priorities that will be impacted by the upcoming state biennial budget. There are five priority areas that are critical to our success in continuing to meet the needs of our student body.

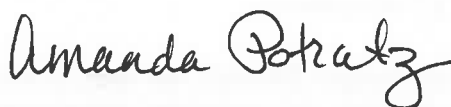
- The comprehensive pupil count mitigation approach that allows districts to use the greater of the 2019-20 or 2020-21 pupil count for revenue limit calculations, increase the special adjustment aid from 85% to 90%, and treat the non-recurring declining enrollment exemption and base revenue hold harmless as recurring adjustments for one year only.

- Set the low revenue ceiling at 90% of the statewide average maximum revenue limit per student. The current ceiling amount of \$10,000 is 87.3 percent of the current state average revenue limit of \$11,450. Support for low revenue ceiling adjustments in the past budget biennium have had a significant positive impact on the School District of Omro.
- Provide a \$200 per pupil general revenue increase in each year of the biennium. The increases in per pupil revenues impacts the programs, services, and opportunities that we provide students. These increases help the school district to meet its ongoing financial commitments, such as facilities maintenance, fixed utilities costs, and staffing needs.
- Increase special education aid to 50% of aidable costs by the end of biennium. Most importantly, this would help to meet the ongoing needs of students with disabilities. In addition, to cover the funding gap between required special education costs and current state funding, Wisconsin school districts collectively transfer about \$1.15 billion annually from district general funds. The School District of Omro's annual transfer for special education is approximately \$1.3 million. This funding deficiency has a lasting impact on programming and services throughout the district.
- Expand the School Mental Health Categorical Aid program for services provided by school psychologists, nurses, counselors, and social workers. Categorical aid would ensure that all schools receive some financial support for these critical services for students with mental health needs.

We very much appreciate your partnership and are grateful for any assistance that you may be able to provide. Please contact us with any questions.



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