

April 5, 2023

Members of the Joint Finance Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of Wisconsin public schools.

I am the Director of Business Services for the School District of Brown Deer, a first-ring Milwaukee suburb that supports over 1,600 students. 80% are children of color, and over 50% are economically disadvantaged. Each year students come to our district with greater academic needs that require additional instructional support. Our children are also facing a mental health crisis, and schools are doing the best they can to address those overwhelming needs.

As school districts we are facing unprecedented increases in our overall costs, and while some expenses may not directly impact our state report card, they are essential nonetheless:

- In our district, contracted transportation costs rose 5% this year and will increase another 7% next year, not including substantial fuel surcharges
- Our utility costs have risen more than 10% year over year
- The job market for support staff continues to be extremely tight. Paraprofessional and custodial roles that paid \$14 an hour just two years ago now demand \$16-\$17, even for individuals with little to no experience
- Our area has lost two major group health insurers over the last year, and our District is facing a 20% increase in health insurance costs, with little available relief in a less-competitive marketplace.

Finally, attracting and retaining high-quality teaching staff has never been more challenging. The college pipeline is shrinking and applicant pools are at historic lows. Right now, excellent teachers can and do command significant compensation, and districts are forced to choose between meeting those demands or scrambling to find replacements. Regular teacher turnover is not a recipe for long-term academic success.

To adequately address these challenges, school districts need predictable and sustainable revenue over time. The federal funding was welcome, but it's fiscally irresponsible to make long range plans with one-time funding. **It is critical that a significant increase in spendable dollars be provided to public education in this budget.**

These needs are real. These costs are real. The help we need is real. Thank you.

Respectfully,



Kevin Klimek  
Director of Business Services  
School District of Brown Deer