April 5, 2023

Dear Members of the Joint Finance Committee,

The School District of Greenfield believes all learning begins with meaningful relationships and that belief extends to the positive relationships we develop and nurture with you, and your staff on behalf of the students, staff, and families in our District. The Greenfield School District is an amazing place for students and staff to learn, grow and succeed. We have 3,496 students in grades 4K-12th grade; our 4K program is a full-day program with a half-day option for parents. 51% of our student population are students of color, and 50% of our students receive free or reduced lunch. There are 40 first languages spoken in the District. The diversity in our District is reflected in the first languages spoken in the District. The most frequently spoken are: Spanish, Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi, Serbian, Vietnamese, and Ukrainian. 12% of our students have met criteria to be identified as a student with special needs. The budget amount required to educate our students with disabilities is $7.4 million, after federal and state reimbursement that requires a transfer of $4.7 million out of our general operations budget (Fund 10) into our special education budget (Fund 27). Finally, it is important to recognize the 486 highly committed professional educators, administrators, support staff, food service workers, and custodians in our District who have a laser-like focus on meeting the social, emotional, physical and academic needs of the children and families in the School District of Greenfield.

We take great pride in offering an excellent educational experience in an environment focused on strong relationships, ensuring our graduates are well-prepared for the next stages of their lives. As the 2023-25 Biennial Budget process unfolds, we value the opportunity to have important conversations about the resources necessary to make this a reality for EACH of our students.

At the end of the 2022-23 school year, the School District of Greenfield will have utilized all of our ESSER dollars. Since there was no increase to the revenue limit and/or an increase to per pupil categorical aid in the last biennium, in addition to using our ESSER funds to support students' learning disruption due to the pandemic, we also needed to utilize our ESSER funds to fill significant operational budget gaps. This, along with record-breaking inflation, is creating structural budget hardships on our District. While school districts across the state have not realized an inflationary increase in over a decade, we must still include in next year's budget, a 20% increase in our transportation budget, 10% increase in our utilities, a 25% increase in technology costs to address cybersecurity, and a 5% increase in our contracted services to maintain our facilities. These increases are all due to inflation. This puts the district in a difficult financial position and does not even begin to factor in appropriate salary increases for our critically important workforce- our professional educators and support staff.

The workforce of tomorrow is currently in our 4K through 12th grade classrooms as we speak. We must work together in a student-centered, collaborative, and productive manner on policy and budget matters as they relate to K-12 public education which can only elevate the learning experiences our children have in our schools and amplify students' ability to be successful in Wisconsin's future workforce.

We would ask that the Joint Finance Committee prioritize the following in the 2023-25 biennial budget:
- Increasing current funding for public school students by $1,510 per student over the two years of the biennium in the form of spendable revenue to address record inflation and looming fiscal cliffs.
- Increasing state Special Education reimbursement to 60% in FY1 and 90% in FY2
- Providing funding for mental health services through a per pupil categorical aid.

Sincerely,

Lisa Elliott
Superintendent