

To Senator Devin LeMahieu and Representative Paul Tittl,

As the elected officials representing the School District of Chilton, we, the members of the Chilton Board of Education, respectfully request that you work with your legislative colleagues to support increased funding for public education in the current budget proposal for the benefit of all Wisconsin public school students.

Prior to 1993, when revenue limits were put into place to control increases to taxpayers, the School District of Chilton was a low spending District. Since that time, our District has remained a low spending District. Our current per pupil expenditures are below the State average. For 2013-2014, the state average for instructional costs (general and special education funds) per student were \$13,291; Chilton's instructional costs were \$10,516 or 21% below the state average. The state average revenue per student (general and special education funds) was \$13,390; Chilton's revenue was only \$10,405, again, 22% below the state average. Through careful management and planning, we have worked diligently to control costs while still providing an excellent educational program that focuses on all students reaching their potential. As a low spending district, we believe we continue to be penalized through a state funding system that provides less and less support to our efforts, while levels of accountability rise, student poverty increases, and student needs (ELL and Special Education) grow exponentially.

Over the past ten years, in order to develop a balanced budget that meets the community of Chilton's expectations of a quality education for students, while also mindful of controlling costs, the School District of Chilton has reduced its expenditures in excess of 1.5 million dollars, or 1-2% of our annual operating budget. As a result, our expenditures are now at the same level they were in the 2007-2008 fiscal year, while simultaneously trying to sustain increased legislated accountability and mandates. In addition, we have refinanced debt to reduce costs to our local taxpayers, asked our employees to make greater contributions to their benefit costs, and have reduced our fund balance to within recently revised policy limits. Prior to the release of the current budget proposal, the School District of Chilton was facing a 4% budget deficit for the 2015-2016 school year. The proposed \$150 decrease per student in public school funding for 2015-2016, which includes no revenue limit increase, results in a \$167,100 "base" cut for the School District of Chilton. When factored together (base cut plus no inflationary revenue cap increase) the overall results in reductions in educational opportunities for public school students in Chilton grows to almost a 6% budget deficit for the 2015-2016 school year.

In the second year of the biennium, while the Governor proposes to add \$142 million to the per-pupil categorical aid, the net result is a cut of approximately \$135 per pupil over the biennium. In addition, with no increase in the revenue limit during the second year, this increased funding will flow directly to tax payers as property relief. This promise of increased aid will not provide additional dollars to schools to support the educational needs of students. While the School Board of Chilton is appreciative of the Governor's and Legislator's efforts to control state taxes, this control can no longer come at the expense of providing a quality education to students in Wisconsin's public schools. Our goal as a School District is to Exceed Expectations on the State Report Card. In order to meet this goal and provide an educational experience that prepares our students with skills ready to meet the college and career challenges of the 21 st Century, the current budget must be revised to reflect appropriate funding for Wisconsin's public schools.

We call upon you to work with your legislative colleagues to restore the \$150 per pupil aid for the 2015-2016 school year. We also urge you to return to the increase in revenue limits annually, at the rate of inflation, to accommodate increases in costs to school districts and to provide a stable and predictable annual increase for schools to use in budgetary planning.

Wisconsin has a long and proud history of providing a high-quality public education system. We are committed to continuing this challenging work in Chilton, but we cannot continue to deliver our present level of quality programming without adequate support from the state. Governor Walker and various legislators have made public comments in support of increasing funding for public schools if additional state revenue is available after April tax collections are counted. We request that adequate state funding levels be restored to K-12 public education regardless of additional state revenue. Wisconsin's public schools cannot be expected to provide increased levels of student achievement and accountability with continued decreased levels of financial support from the state.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and thank you for your service to people of the State of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Mr. Randy Lisowe
Board President

Mr. Terry Criter
Board Vice-President

Mr. Corey Brickl
Board Treasurer

Mr. Jerry Kolbe
Board Clerk

Mr. David Bailey
Board Member at-large