

Dear Wisconsin Joint Finance

Committee

2021-2022

I strongly feel that there should be a chorus extracurriculum for next year. Chorus gives us performance and social skills. In chorus we have to work together to make our performances better. Chorus is very fun and all my classmates enjoy it. We all have fun working together to make our choreography and singing better. When we are done with a performance we are all happy and excited because we all know we achieved our goals. To understand how people may think we don't need chorus cause it's all fun and no learning. But I know also that chorus is a learning process also. you need to learn to sing on pitch, read the

notes, and learn the dances,  
School is all about learning  
and that is what Chorus  
is about to. In conclusion  
to my statement we need  
more funding to keep our  
school going and classes  
in progress.

Sincerely,

Jessica  
Wozniak

P.S. If a teacher is  
willing to offer there  
time for free to teach  
us than they are a very  
good person and should  
be able to do so.

Dear Wisconsin Finance  
Committee,

We think that we  
should keep chorus, it is  
very fun and it does not  
cost any money. The only  
other classes we have to  
choose from are band and  
art, and some people are  
not good at art and some  
families can't afford to  
buy their kids instruments.

If kids in school  
want to become a professional  
singer and don't have the class  
to be a singer, their dreams  
could be shot. My chorus  
teacher would be willing  
to teach us for free,  
and she is a very good  
chorus teacher.

Sincerely,  
Heather Schuh

April 5, 2001

Dear Wisconsin Legislature Joint Committee on Finance:

My name is Melanie Harvath and I live at 100 Main Street in Niagara, Wisconsin. I am the President of our Parent Group at Niagara Elementary School. I volunteer many hours at school and am a concerned parent of two young boys.

My oldest started school in 1996. So I have witnessed over 30 cuts. It scares me to think when will the cuts stop. We have not only lost many great teachers but wonderful programs.

I recently found out that it is not required to have a Nurse at school. We have been told that they will cut her back to .50 of the time. I have problems with this. My youngest son has Asthma. He rarely uses an Albuterol, inhaler but uses a Nebulizer Machine. He can be on this machine nine months out of the year. I have GREAT concerns who they will delegate to give my son treatments. He has two different medications. One for when he's wheezing, Albuterol. The other is for preventive when the mold count is high, Cromolyn Sodium.

After the 15-minute treatment is given you must listen to his breathing to see if the wheezing has stopped or gotten better. The nurse will also decide if he can participate in recess or Gym class. Someone trained must do this. I am not prepared to let just anyone give treatments to my son.

I know of many other children with Asthma or who have to take a controlled substance. I wonder who will take on this responsibility?

I volunteer and am in classrooms that I have to take children to the Nurse. Sometimes A sliver, something in their eye, scratches, fevers, flu, sore throats, belly aches, wet pants, and I even had 3 Kindergarten children stick their tongues on metal outside this winter. Many times the children just go to the Nurse for emotional support. Our Counselor was also cut back.

In closing I would just like to say Thank You for listening and PLEASE remember EVERY KID DESERVES A GREAT SCHOOL!!

Melanie Harvath



President of the Parent Volunteer Group  
Concerned Parent

My name is Jayann Erkkila. I live at 1111 Westwood Ave. Kingsford, Michigan. I teach sixth grade science, social studies, skills and Reading at Niagara Middle School.

Before coming to Niagara Public School, I taught at a private Catholic School in Michigan. At the Catholic School we begged, borrowed and took what ever anyone had to offer. The electives and special services were limited because of funding and many special need students, the extremely intelligent or the special education, did not get the services that Public Schools could offer.

Nine years ago I left the Catholic School and was hired at Niagara Public School. I was amazed at how much more the public school could offer students and provide support for teachers. Today, slowly by slowly, this no longer holds true. The revenue caps and State funds that have not kept up with rising school cost, has put us behind. It's almost as if I'm back at the Catholic School.

The past three years have hit our school the hardest. Programs have been cut, such as high school FACE, Spanish and this next year in sixth grade will be tech. Ed. All students need to have the exposure to these types of classes mostly our at risk students who excel in the hands -on classes. Many students come to school with baggage from home, friends and family. We have lost our support staff that would spend time with these students and give them the skills they need to move on and be able to learn. This year we are in jeopardy of losing our nurse, who has helped students unload and be able to come to the classroom to learn. The custodians that keep a clean and professional place for everyone have been cut back. There are many rooms, limited staff and not enough time for everything that needs to get done.

We need to look at the whole picture. Make sure ALL kids come first. They are our future. We are here to make sure the best can be given so that in return they are productive citizens. We need your support. Education needs to be looked at closer before the money goes elsewhere.

We all care,  
Thank you,  
Jayann Erkkila





April 5, 2001

Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance:

My name is Carol P. Kick. I reside at W9526 Aspen Court in Iron Mountain, Michigan. I have been employed for ten years by the School District of Niagara in Niagara, Wisconsin. Currently, I teach sixth, seventh, and eighth grade English and Reading in the Niagara Middle School.

For the past twenty-five years I have proudly been a teacher, a promoter of education, to hundreds and hundreds of our most precious natural resource—children. I strongly believe that all children need and deserve equal educational opportunities to become productive citizens. Due to continual budget constraints, the School District of Niagara is no longer in a stable financial position to provide optimal learning situations for our students. Many educational and support programs have been eliminated since 1995. Our students are at risk.

One such deleted program, Spanish, has had a ripple effect within our middle school. Not only are we no longer able to afford students the opportunity of learning about another culture and its language, but also scheduling has become a nightmare, squeezing additional students into already overcrowded, limited elective courses. Students have lost the freedom of choice. The avenues of discovering and enhancing hidden talents through a variety of elective course offerings have been stripped from them. Our students are at risk.

At this writing, Niagara Middle School, which has embraced the middle school concept since 1993, is in jeopardy of returning to a junior high of yesteryear. Again, the lack of sufficient state funding is forcing our administration to consider eliminating the middle school common planning period. Consequently, time for planning innovative interdisciplinary units, which stimulate student involvement and achievement, will be lost. Time to confer with colleagues about student concerns and to collaboratively arrive at workable solutions will be lost. Time to meet with students, parents, community members, and business leaders to cooperatively develop plans of action that will ensure our students' success now and tomorrow will be lost. Our students are at risk.

My husband and I moved from California to the Midwest and settled in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in the town of my husband's employment. Intentionally, we have remained in Michigan, even though I teach in Wisconsin, for I feel confident my two children are receiving a quality education. Students in Iron Mountain have elective and required class choices. They are being afforded opportunities Niagara can no longer boast of providing. It is not surprising that many of the parents of Niagara have chosen to move across the border, the short distance to Michigan schools, where their children are afforded the opportunity of choice. Sadly, too, Niagara Public Schools has no hopes of attracting new families to the school in the absence of a full and varied curriculum. Niagara students are at risk. I am grateful my own children are not at risk.

Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance

April 5, 2001

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The School District of Niagara employs qualified, caring professionals who do their jobs successfully. The students of Niagara learn here. Niagara Public Schools are a benefit to the community, to the county, to the state, to the nation. Supporting budget initiatives that force our district to continue to make dramatic cuts, ultimately undermines our great school and places our future aspiring citizens at risk. Educating children makes its demand on teachers, parents, community members, state and local government officials to cooperatively support the system. We are doing our part, yet our students are at risk. Every child needs and deserves equal educational opportunities. Please make educating our children a priority. Help us to provide our students with a future that is not at risk.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

*Carol P. Kick*

Carol P. Kick

**Niagara School District**  
**Niagara, WI 54151**

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Phone (715) 251-3518

April 03, 2001

Blanche K. Walimaa  
Jefferson Ave.  
Niagara, WI 54151

Dear Joint Finance Company:

My name is Blanche Walimaa and I am a special education teacher at Niagara Middle School. I'm writing this letter to you because our school is in need of financial assistance. Programs are being cut and there will possibly be more programs being cut in the near future. Thus far we have lost a half-time elementary art teacher, an early childhood teacher, and an athletic director. These cuts directly affect our students in one way or another.

Other issues that have been discussed are possibly going back to the old junior high school schedule. This means losing our middle school concept. One of the main issues of the middle school concept is losing our middle school planning period. This is an important time of the day in which all of the middle school core teachers meet together and discuss students' academic needs, meet with parents, and discuss weekly activities. This is also a time when teachers support one another when various problems may arise.

Custodial positions may also be getting cut and we all know that buildings need consistent maintenance and upkeep. We know that when public buildings are not kept up, it doesn't take long for it to deteriorate. We have a clean facility and let's keep it that way. The surroundings and atmosphere are beneficial to a student's quality education. We expect the best for our students and you should too!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Blanche K. Walimaa*

Blanche K. Walimaa  
Special Ed. Teacher  
Niagara School District



April 4, 2001

To: Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance  
From: David G. Langlois  
HC-3, Box 239D, Florence, Wisconsin 54121  
Re: School Finance

Dear JFC Members,

I respectfully address you as a concerned tax-paying citizen voicing concern for the educational welfare of the school children of not only Florence County but, of all the small rural districts in Wisconsin. The legislative imposition of the revenue cap has wreaked devastation upon academic programs, peripheral services, athletics and building maintenance, alike. The statistics available to you should make that abundantly clear.

I am concerned that any further advocacy of the revenue cap on your part would only leave an unbiased observer to conclude that you are bent on the systematic dismantling of school districts that were once not only financially viable, but educationally exceptional. Are we to believe that business, government or even private households could survive under identical fiscal restraints?

Furthermore, any Wisconsin resident who even remotely claims a benevolent interest in public education has a right to beam with pride at the national test results produced by Wisconsin students. Are we to further believe that these results are a matter of luck? It has all to do with dedicated teaching staff, concerned parents/citizens, motivated young people and financial support. Each of these facets serves as an integral part of an educational machine that has heretofore provided unique educational opportunities for the school children of Wisconsin.

The time will soon come for each of you to take a stand and to express opinions regarding school finance. I ask that you please consider your stewardship role in the education of our youth, for, you too will play an integral part either one way or another.

Respectfully,



David G. Langlois

W8608 Becky Lane  
Niagara, WI 54151  
April 4, 2001

Dear Members of the Joint Finance Committee,

My name is Christine Prost. I am the parent of a fifth grader and a seventh grader at Niagara Public Schools. I have also been a classroom teacher for the past 26 years; 17 of those years at Niagara. I'm very concerned about the quality of education that my children are receiving. I want them to be able to achieve any goal they set for themselves knowing it's possible because they've had a solid educational foundation. My children deserve a great education.

Will that expectation be realistic in the future? Revenue caps have tightened the school budget causing cuts. Already educational staff has been reduced requiring elimination of business education, early childhood, and community schools programs. The schools computers are becoming antiquated are in desperate need of being updated. Some college bound classes are only offered on alternating years. If this trend continues because of our declining enrollment, what classes will be available when my seventh grader and fifth grader reach high school? Will they be able to take the college preparatory classes they will need to further their educations? Knowing that my education has helped me achieve my goals, my children deserve a great education so that they can achieve their full potential.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Christine Prost

*Christine Prost*

Sam Hansen  
N20645 County O  
Niagara, WI 54151

Dear Legislators,

The rural public school that I attend, Niagara High School, is in serious trouble. The financial situation that it is in is a detriment to everyone. It hurts the students beyond comprehension. It seems that all high end electives are being dropped one by one. This hurts many students who want to be better prepared for higher education. For example, I had wanted to take calculus this school year and my school did not have the money to offer the class.

More and more students will be impacted by cuts in funding and budgets for public schools. Less students will be prepared to go onto higher education. This would mean less people graduate from universities and therefore less workers will be able to perform important jobs such as teaching.

The current learning situation in small schools is regrettable and truly a serious problem. If this problem is not solved then the education of everyone in this country will plummet until no one will be able to perform any high level functions in any field. This is an terrible future and one that should be avoided at all costs.

Sincerely,

Sam Hansen



To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Rebecca Stockel and I am a senior at Niagara High School in Niagara, Wisconsin. I am ranked in the top of my class and value a good education, as do the other students who attend the Niagara Public Schools. Without knowledge, no one can be successful. I want to be successful. I also want the future students of the Niagara Public Schools to have all the opportunities that other students their ages will have.

When I was a young girl, my father was transferred within his company to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. My family chose to move to Niagara because of the superb schooling offered at all grade levels. Until I was in middle school, Niagara continued to boast a superior learning institution. It was then that the state funding we needed to run our school was diminished greatly.

The city of Niagara banded together during this rough time and tried to raise the difference on its own, but it was useless. Our funds continued to drop until the school could not afford the excellent educational programs it once had. The Niagara School Board tried to hold the school together with what little they had, but soon requests for new textbooks were being denied, teachers' salaries were being cut, and whole programs were being deleted from the system.

Today, classes throughout the public school are too large to obtain a complete education. Sometimes thirty or more students (especially at the elementary level, when small class sizes are vital to the learning process), are crammed into classrooms that were built with fifteen to twenty students in mind. Some classes are so large that the teacher has to give up his own personal desk to allow space for all students. Important high school courses such as Advanced Biology, Advanced Chemistry, Economics, and Psychology are offered solely as one-semester courses. Our teachers have full schedules, with classes seven hours a day and tutoring sessions or a makeshift "yearbook class" (for which students earn no credit) during their free periods, at lunchtime, and before and after school hours. One teacher, who is also advisor to two school organizations, has stayed overnight- more than a few times- to finish her work because there is no one else who can do the things she does. These problems are all because the Niagara Public School District lacks the funds to hire more teachers and advisors.

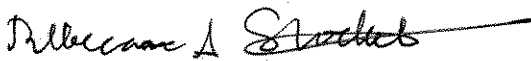
One of the problems that almost every Niagara High School student faces is meeting the requirements for a graduating diploma. This is not because the average student at our school is not intelligent. It is because the school is unable to offer certain classes that go beyond the basic English, math, and science requirements. We have only three elective courses offered: band, which is offered only one hour, art, which is offered three hours to accommodate the eighty- four students, and woodshop, which runs most of the day. Each of these electives is overly full, because a certain number of electives is required to earn a general or college- preparatory diploma. The band barely fits inside the band room, art classes are unable to study three- dimensional art for lack of room, and the woodshop always has many students in the room, fixing the broken furniture that we can not afford to replace. We have none of the other electives that other schools are able to offer such as theater class, family and consumer education (home economics), or business courses such as accounting. We offer only one foreign language, and each Spanish class is also overly full. These classes are very diverse because of the variety of levels of students all combined to form one class. This makes it difficult for the

beginning levels to keep up and difficult for the advanced levels to learn new information.

Our school needs your help. We need state funding to replace our outdated textbooks, and hire new teachers. We need state funding so that we can compete with other public schools in the country. Niagara Public Schools deserves a chance. I do not want to see my younger sister and her classmates forced to pay for classes out of a local college just to meet the standards of a high school diploma because the Wisconsin state legislature will not attempt to fund a quality public education for Wisconsin students. Without the money, there is no possibility of a good education. Without an education, there can be no future.

I want a future for the students of the Niagara Public Schools. What do you want? If the state does not help fund its public school system, then it is condemning itself to poverty and hopelessness. Give us the chance we deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca A. Stockel". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rebecca A. Stockel

To Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance:

My name is Gary Molle. I am a parent, uncle, and middle school math teacher at Niagara Public Schools. Niagara is my home community. I have lived here my entire life with the exception of the four years I went away to college. I raised two boys who attended Niagara Public Schools. The youngest graduated in 1994. I am fortunate that my boys were not as severely affected by the budget constraints placed upon Niagara's schools by the state as today's students are. I don't want you to think there weren't any affects. My son Jason was the tennis MVP as a junior and could not even compete the following year as tennis was cut due to budget constraints. I was the Community School Director and Winter Games Director before those positions were cut. We used to have 50 to 100 kids per day in our gyms, three evenings a week and on the weekends for community schools activities. As participants in the Winter Games we were part of over 2000 competitors that would stay in hosts homes and competed in such activities as table tennis, chess, snow shoeing, x-country skiing, swimming, volleyball, basketball, bowling, etc. I was the varsity boys' basketball coach that saw the decline of our program once the gyms were closed and we lost our organized elementary program and our freshman basketball program. I have nieces in the school system that are now suffering from the state's budget policies. Their track coaches went from two head coaches and one assistant to just one head coach and no assistant. Their high school class selections are reduced and allow for no flexibility in scheduling.

I am very deeply upset over the decline in our educational system. We lost sections in our elementary school that resulted in larger class sizes. We lost Home Economics/Face classes in the middle school and high school. We lost pre-algebra and calculus math classes. We now don't even offer pre-algebra every year. We have students that want calculus and it is no longer offered. We lost foreign language in the middle school. We lost sections of several different subjects in the high school. We went from 13 English classes to 9. We went from 3 Biology classes to 2. We went from 3 Earth Science classes to just 2 for the freshmen. We went from a full year of Advanced Chemistry to a half a year. The fact that these sections are gone means that students have virtually no flexibility in planning their high school schedules. If they deviate at all from what the majority of students are selecting they are unable to get certain classes because of schedule conflicts. We lost ½ an elementary counselor. We lost 60 % of a science teacher. We lost morning detention. We lost professional development monies for teacher improvement and growth. We lost our entire business education department.

The local booster club has picked up much of the expenses for our extracurricular programs and is now out of money. When our football and track bleachers were condemned we went several embarrassing years without them until the booster club funded replacing them. In spite of the booster club's efforts we still lost wrestling, tennis, 2 track coaches, freshman basketball, and the spring athletic director.

Those areas that define and refine a community have also been hit hard. We lost school involvement in the community musical. We lost the coordinator of the gifted and talented program and an aide for this program. We lost a Title 1 aide. We lost 25% of a



music teacher. We lost time for the librarian. We lost the pep band. We lost the drama class.

On top of this we have imposed user fees for all extracurriculars, drivers' education, Camp Bird, and all field trips. We are constantly doing fundraisers to help defray costs for field trips and so on.

We have new school buildings and it is very disheartening to see them getting run down. This is happening because we lost one custodian. We also lost one summer custodian position. We don't have funds to replace clocks that have stopped working, replace ceiling tiles that are stained from leaks, carpeting that is torn, and the list goes on.

In spite of all these cutbacks we face a several hundred thousand dollar shortfall next year. Not only has the quality of our educational system greatly diminished but also we may well face closing the doors unless the budget restraints are eliminated.

Our enrollment has declined approximately 12 students per grade over the last 12 years. This does not mean we can cut teachers. If we split 56 students per grade into two sections or 44 students per grade into two sections the difference is only 6 students per class. We certainly can't eliminate a teacher and put all 44 students into one room. To compound matters worse once the word gets out that Niagara Public Schools aren't what they used to be you can be certain families will choose to live elsewhere.

Niagara Public Schools is not the only school to have been devastated by the state's budget decisions. Community involvement and pride has begun to decline. Many of our neighboring schools have had or are now beginning to have similar cutbacks and financial shortfalls. I suspect this problem goes well beyond just our area. It won't be long before our state and national test scores will begin to decline as well.

I can't believe that the good people we have elected as legislators would wantonly destroy and abandon our children and communities. I have to believe that you folks and your colleagues are just not aware of the devastation that your budget policies have caused our schools. I hope that you listen to our very real problems and convince your colleagues to save our schools and children and community.

Thank you for your time,

Gary Molle – Parent, Uncle, Teacher, Community Member  
1225 Forest Street  
Niagara, WI 54151  
715-251-4717

April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001

Dear Legislators:

My name is Kendra Youren. I am a junior at Niagara Public Schools. I currently have a 3.96 GPA and am ranked number three in my class. I am a **special needs** student. The first thing that may come to your mind is that I have a learning disability or a physical handicap. But, that is not the case. I represent the other part of the special needs spectrum, the faction that is often ignored and unchallenged. I am a Gifted and Talented student. I excel in Mathematics, Art, Reading and Literature.

Since the day that I set foot in Niagara Public School, my needs have been recognized and my mental ability has been challenged. As a third grader I, and 10 other students, participated in a Gifted and Talented program. Here our minds were asked to reach beyond the normal realms of thinking by use logic problems and new ideas. In fifth grade I was moved into a program that was especially tailored to my needs in the area of Reading and Literature. As a fifth grader I was reading the same books that were part of the Senior curriculum. I found much success in this program. My intellect was challenged and expanded. I was given that extra push to succeed and go above and beyond. But sadly, once I entered into high school my hopes of continuing in the Gifted and Talented program were shattered. Due to budget constraints our GT coordinator was cut and the program was terminated. Leaving many students without the opportunities to participate in this program. I now am reading the same exact books that I read in elementary school. I find my classes to be boring and unchallenging, this is not to say that my teacher are bad educators or boring people. It's just that my needs aren't being met.

But one may think, why are these programs a necessity to our educational curriculum? This program challenges the mental ability of its students. It forces them to think beyond and to enhance their abilities. Without this stimulation gifted students often become bored and unmotivated.

These challenges carve dedicated, creative and innovative people. It is these very same characteristics that are among those most sought by an employer. Because of the solid foundation that they received in high school, they now have the essential building blocks that are needed for university studies. These students are among the elite, they will be the lawyers, the doctors, the inventors. They will pave the way for future generations.

One in ten of the students at Niagara High is a recognized Gifted and Talented young person. This is not to mention, those is lower levels whose gifts go unrecognized. I believe that every student is special and that every student has gifts. To deprive these students of a positive educational experience, only hurts our future. If one wastes food, he deprives himself of nutrients. If someone leaves crops to rot, he starves a nation. But, if a child's mind is not nourished then we choose to deprive him of a future and we are to blame. Then why are these gifts not cultivated? We are our future, we are your future, we are the future!

Sincerely a deeply concerned student,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kendra Youren". The signature is written in black ink and has a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kendra Youren  
N22843 Michele St

Terry J. Youren  
N22843 Michele St.  
Niagara, WI. 54151  
April 5, 2001

Wis. State Joint Finance Committee  
Madison, WI.

Dear Committee Member:

My name is Terry Youren, and I'm a resident of Niagara, Wi. I am an educator and parent of Niagara students. Thirty- one years ago I started on the most wonderful cruise of my life at the Niagara Public Schools. The school was the best in the area, (Wisconsin and Michigan). I was thrilled to be associated with a school that put education first. What ever was needed was provided to give the students of Niagara the best possible education.

But as time went on, the ship I was on, started to experience rougher seas. The State government started to put up barriers for our school, which made it extremely difficult for our school to succeed. The captain in charge of our State government decided on some new ideas about education. He said, " Don't worry. It is the right thing to do for education." So we continued on our cruise full steam ahead, assuming everything was going to be all right. Then off in the distance, we started to see icebergs (revenue caps), and realized we were on a collision course. As we neared the iceberg, we started to feel the effects of the icebergs (loss of educational programs, loss of staff and support staff, and loss of students).

What is the State government going to do with this major problem facing our school system? Will they be the ship that arrived late and cost many lives, or will they come to the rescue in time to provide the boats and life jackets necessary to save lives.

Ever child deserves to be a part of a GREAT SCHOOL. Will the State realize

that our schools are like the Titanic, waiting to be rescued? The S.O.S. call has gone out. The question is, will the State be there to help us?

Thank you for taking the time to listen. I certainly hope that YOU put children first.

They are the future of this country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terry Youren". The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Terry Youren

April 5, 2001

Elizabeth Youren  
N22843 Michele St.  
Niagara, WI 54151

To: The Wisconsin State Joint Finance Committee, Madison, WI.

My name is Elizabeth Youren. I am a resident of Niagara, situated in Northeast Wisconsin. I am a parent of two students who attend Niagara High School. I have lived in Niagara for over twenty years. We have always been proud of our school and community. Currently, I have been especially concerned about the curriculum in the high school. My children are college-bound and need advanced classes to adequately prepare them for higher education. Such classes as calculus, advanced chemistry and advanced biology, for example, are being looked upon as possible ones to be eliminated due to budgetary concerns. Small high schools need to be competitive in the market of preparing students for college. Our children deserve a school that will allow them to be successful in college and later in the job market. Historically, new families moving into the area selected Niagara as their choice of residence because it had a school system that would meet or exceed the educational needs of their children. We are not perceived as this type of school anymore because financial cuts are constantly forefront in the minds of prospective newcomers to our area. We need to break this cycle of declining enrollment and budgetary cuts that is prevailing in our school. **Our children deserve a great school!!! Great schools benefit everyone!!!** Meeting the educational needs of our children is what will make a productive community and a progressive work force.

Thank you for your concern.

  
Elizabeth Youren.



April 5, 2001

To the members of the Joint Financing Committee:

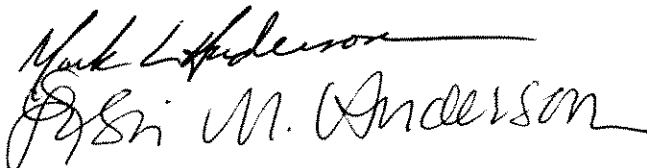
As parents of children in the Niagara school district, we are extremely alarmed at the rapid disintegration of our small schools in Wisconsin. We made a conscious decision 2 years ago to move back to Wisconsin from Michigan. We never thought that having our children attend public school in Wisconsin would have a negative impact on their education. Programs that are important to our children's education are being or have already been eliminated and we believe that this is only the beginning of what students in Niagara, Wisconsin will be lacking.

The Niagara School District has a bare bones curriculum from K-12. The elementary school offers a great staff and a wonderful facility. Our children have wonderful teachers who are engaging their students in the classroom. Our son Colin, a Kindergartner, does not receive music. Our son Jacob, a second grader, excels in all areas, but does not benefit from a gifted and talented program where he could find ways to further excel in his studies.

Due to lack of funds, there has not been enough money to buy new text books on a regular basis. While the state is funding our revenue increases at 2.9%, the cost of our children's education continues to rise at 3.8%. These facts guarantee that our district will continually need to be cutting programs, staff or both. In our opinion, this does not qualify for an equal and appropriate education. The future of our children's schooling is bleak under these circumstances. The middle school is not able to offer anything beyond what is mandated by the state. High school students are worried about whether or not they will be able to have enough classes to further their education. Is this a climate for productive education?

My husband and I both graduated from state colleges in Wisconsin and fully intend that our children will further their education and be very successful. We are waiting to see what the future has to offer our children in Wisconsin. If Wisconsin cannot fund small schools and offer a diversified curriculum, where students will be guaranteed to benefit the most from their education, then we will not be able to be in Wisconsin. The quality of our children's education is extremely important to us and we need our representatives to show us that it is equally as important to them. The legislature in Wisconsin needs to realize that they moving in the wrong direction. We need more grants like S.A.G.E. available and we need to reformulate the way districts like ours receive their funding. Our children are worth it!

Mark and Lisa Anderson  
W6547 Chapman Road  
Niagara, WI 54151

Handwritten signatures of Mark and Lisa Anderson. The signature for Mark Anderson is written in black ink and is partially obscured by the signature for Lisa M. Anderson, which is written in blue ink.

Patricia Sparapani  
W8605 Michelle Street  
Niagara, Wisconsin 54151  
April 5, 2001

Dear Committee Members,

I am the mother of three children and also a lifelong member of the community of Niagara, Wisconsin. My husband and I are deeply concerned about the decrease in the quality of education the Niagara School District has to offer our children. This decrease continues at an alarming rate, not because of unqualified staff, but because of a lack of funding.

Our youngest child, Maria, age 4, has autism and will be attending kindergarten in the fall. I was recently encouraged to give legal guardianship of Maria to my sister who lives in Michigan in order that my child receive an appropriate education. You can imagine my shocked reaction to this suggestion. I was then informed that this is a growing practice in this area for regular as well as special education students.

In the past our oldest daughter, Erin, age 14, has benefited from the Gifted and Talented program. Unfortunately, this program was one of many to be cut. Our current system is failing to meet the needs of our college bound students.

Our daughter, Emily, age 12, has an interest in foreign language but will not have the opportunity to begin this study in middle school, because this was one of many elective courses cut. We have a well-founded fear that our daughters will be at a severe disadvantage upon entering college because of the "bare bones" trend in education in our state, especially in rural areas like Niagara.

My nieces and nephews attend school in suburbs of Milwaukee and Madison. They are currently being offered a richly varied education. My daughters are being denied that which is readily available to their cousins. I feel that each child, no matter where they live, should have equal access to quality education.

I am not a quitter or a passive observer in the education of my children. I have a deep sense of pride in my community and in the state of Wisconsin. You have my full support in making the changes necessary to make education the top priority it should be. We can work together to make this change.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and in responding to our concerns.

Sincerely,



Patricia Sparapani

301 Robinson St.  
Niagara, WI 54151

April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001

Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee  
Senate Bill 55

Dear Committee Members,

Our names are Richard and Donna Henrichs. We live at 301 Robinson Street in Niagara, WI. We are writing this letter as concerned parents and child advocates. Twelve years ago we chose to live and operate a business in Niagara because we believed Niagara's school district was the finest in the area. Furthermore, we now have two children attending the elementary school.

Unfortunately, in the past five years our school has had to make approximately 35 detrimental cuts because of the decrease in funding and enrollment. What impact does this have on our society's most precious resource, our children? Children are our future!

The United States is the most powerful nation in the world. In this modern day of technology, I am appalled that as a society we are unable to come up with better solutions for our school systems. We should be improving the quality of our education, not demoting it!

As a result of declining enrollment and funding, I believe parents will choose alternative education such as private schools, home schooling, and charter schools. Hence, public schools will receive even less funding, and the quality of education will continually deteriorate. Will public schools become obsolete?

Please help us to help our children, and save our schools. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

*Donna Henrichs*  
*Richard Henrichs*

To the Legislative Finance Committee:

My name is Gerard Broullire. I am a rural Wisconsin native having been born and raised on a small farm in Aurora, Wisconsin. My wife and I were married and working in Lower Michigan when we decided we wanted to move back to this area. In 1981, we started out in Iron Mountain, Michigan, across the border, but as we had our family, we had to decide where we wanted our children to go to school. After researching the land availability, and the school systems in the surrounding communities (Iron Mountain, Kingsford, Norway, and North Dickinson, Michigan, and Florence, Aurora, Spread Eagle, and Niagara, Wisconsin), we chose to locate in Niagara because of the excellent reputation of the school in providing a full complement of classes for all students, while at the same time providing a small school atmosphere. Since our children have started attending Niagara Schools, we have seen a deterioration in the college prep, and standard class offerings, and the Gifted and Talented programs have been eliminated (of which our children qualified).

My wife and I are very concerned about these changes. Our daughter will graduate next year, and her advanced science classes have been cut to one semester each. She almost would have been unable to have a Calculus class next year, but thankfully, it was put back into the schedule. She cannot afford to lose any advanced classes as she prepares for college. Our son will be starting high school next year. He is also in Algebra this year so he will be able to take advanced math throughout his high school years. Will he be able to have all of the higher math classes he needs to be competitive for college? Not if the spending cuts and revenue caps continue to this extent.

In today's global economy, our children will be competing against graduates from all over the world- we are already ranked lower than several industrialized countries. We, personally, and nationally, cannot afford to lose this competitive edge by not providing our students with a GREAT EDUCATION!

Thank You  
Gerard Broullire

To the Wisconsin Legislative Finance Committee

My name is Paula Broullire, I live in Niagara, Wisconsin, and am the Registered Nurse for the Niagara Public Schools. Due to the revenue caps for education, and the declining enrollment, the Niagara Public Schools has been forced to make budget cuts. I currently am employed to work 7/8 time, but usually work far beyond those hours to provide evaluation, follow-up and continuity of care to our students. When I first started working in Niagara, it was a ½ time position. As I began working with the students, staff, and families, I found that I was unable to complete my job as thoroughly as I felt it should be done, and my position was increased. I still find that this is not enough time. Now, the administration has proposed to cut my position back again to ½ time. I do "hands on" care for our district, therefore I deal with the students on a one-to-one basis. So far this year, I have provided care to over 4,727 students, and distributed over 3,424 medications, for a total of over 8,151 face-to-face contacts. This does not include the time I spend with staff and parent concerns and medical liaison. The numbers are not unusual; I provided service last year to over 11,958 students. If my hours are cut, these students, staff and families will not have this service available. We live in a rural community, and I have tailored our Emergency Nursing Service to meet the needs of the families in our community. The students and families will be under served if my position is reduced.

We cannot teach children anything if they are not physically and emotionally well enough to learn. We cannot ignore our children, they are OUR FUTURE! We need to provide them with all of the educational opportunities that we can, and in a responsible manner. It is NOT responsible of us to cut and diminish our Future generations education so they receive only a "bare bones" curriculum and expect them to be able to stay competitive, expand their knowledge base, prosper, and lead our nation into the next millenium! They need and deserve the best that we can give them!!!

Thank - you,  
Paula Broullire

Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee  
April 4, 2001

Judy Sanicki  
1112 Washington  
Niagara, WI

Dear Committee Member,

I am a certified teacher's aide that has worked in the Niagara School System for the last ten years. I am both a parent and taxpayer of the District, and have had three children who have attended school in Niagara. My first daughter graduated in 1990, and is presently taking courses to become a Registered Nurse. My son graduated in 1991, attended Northeast Technical College, and is currently working in Green Bay Wisconsin as a machinist. My youngest daughter, is graduating in the class of 2001, as class Valedictorian, and is planning on attending the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in the fall.

The loss of classes, such as Science, Business, Music, Face, Keyboarding, Math classes for non-Algebra plus qualified staff to teach these classes has put the quality of education in Niagara at risk. I feel that the education provided my two older children was far superior to the education offered to my youngest daughter. I am highly offended at the prospect that my daughter will be attending UW Madison, competing with students from all around the world, and not having the quality of education that she deserved, and that other students with as much potential and drive as my daughter will be deprived of the education due them.



I ask that you seriously consider the future of the students at Niagara, and  
make it possible for them to compete in a highly competitive world.

Judy Sanicki

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judy Sanicki".

Teacher Aide-Special Needs

April 5, 2001

The Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee

Dear Committee member:

The state budget for 2001-2003 (SB 55) as authored by Governor Scott McCallum continues the Thompson-McCallum tradition of undermining public schools and public educators.

The lack of flexibility with revenue caps had the effect of increasing state control rather than returning control to the local level as so many politicians have promised.

Once again there is an attempt to take constitutional authority from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to monitor school performance and standardized testing. Such an attempt would likely further damage Wisconsin's educational system.

Most important, the McCallum budget devalues the contributions of public school teachers. It calls for increased private contracting and lowering teacher license requirements. It will be hard for our state to continue to have good schools without good teachers.

The damage this budget will do to Niagara schools will be to continue the trend of increasing class sizes, decreasing course offerings, cutting support services, and reducing the quality of building maintenance.

Please work to improve the education components of this budget, our kids deserve it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Douglas Grimes". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Doug Grimes  
700 Jefferson Ave.  
Niagara, WI 54151



# WISCONSIN ASSOCIATED COUNTY EXTENSION COMMITTEES, INC.

## Testimony of Ed Miller

Representing Wisconsin Association of County Extension Committees

Thursday, April 5, 2001

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Jim Costello, Vice President  
(920) 921-2521

Hello. My name is Ed Miller and I'm here today to speak in support of the UW-Extension "Best Practices Partnership for Children, Youth and Families" budget proposal. I represent WACEC, the Wisconsin Association of County Extension Committees.

Since 1914, county governments have worked with the University of Wisconsin-Extension to deliver educational programs through a statewide network of faculty and staff based in all 72 counties. Wisconsin counties support the county-based Extension faculty and staff by covering 40% of salary costs and by providing for all overhead, support staff and indirect costs. Our association was formed in 1966 in order to strengthen our partnership with UW-Extension.

This proposal was developed in response to a statewide planning process that we undertake with UW-Extension. In the most recent statewide planning process, which was done last year, almost every county in the state identified unmet needs in serving children, youth and families as a top priority.

This budget proposal would allow UW-Extension to better respond to the increased demand for education, technical assistance and program evaluation in the human services area. Counties and other human services providers need information on the best research and educational practices to target problems such as teen pregnancy, school violence, drug abuse, juvenile crime, and school readiness. We know, from our rising human services budgets, that children, youth and families are in trouble. Education is prevention—and we need to start investing in prevention programs now.

We are asking for \$2.6 million, which will fund 16 new positions, over the biennium to develop new resources and increase our capacity to support our statewide network of Family Living, 4-H and Youth Development agents. This will allow us to effectively introduce more and better research and education to communities across our state.

I am very excited about the evaluation piece in this proposal. As an elected official I like to know I'm voting to make an investment in something that works. The counties and the state spend a lot of money on human services programs and we need to know if we are getting the outcomes we want from those investments. This proposal will help us get that important information.

We recognize that you are faced with a tight budget. As a county board member I understand your situation. Like you, I have to prioritize. I urge you to make this important investment in prevention education a priority. We will all reap the benefits of your wise choice.



## A Best Practices Partnership for Children, Youth and Families

The University of Wisconsin-Extension has requested \$2.06 million in general purpose revenue (over two years) to address the most pressing challenges facing Wisconsin's children, youth and families.

Economic and social trends are placing increased pressure on communities and organizations serving children, youth and families. UW-Extension, through its network of county based faculty and staff, provide research, education and facilitation resources that are important to the success of community providers. Increased demand for this type of support has begun to outstrip UW-Extension's capacity to sustain its historically strong level of community involvement and leadership. Additional investments in outreach education and applied research are needed to address critical issues such as school violence, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, juvenile crime, positive parenting, child development and school readiness. Additionally, this proposal will assist local providers in the development of performance measures and program evaluation models so that the effectiveness of human service efforts can be measured.

By developing and disseminating reliable research on these and other topics identified by communities, UW-Extension educators can identify program models, implementation methods and evaluation techniques with documented records of success. Once this information is delivered to local service agencies and coalitions, it will greatly enhance their efforts to tackle these tough issues and have a positive impact in their communities.

This partnership would tap the University of Wisconsin System's abundant research base, deliver that knowledge through UW-Extension's unparalleled network of community-based faculty and staff, improve the effectiveness of local services, and increase the efficiency of program design. This would be accomplished by:

- Facilitating local coalitions comprised of community stakeholders such as law enforcement, school districts, non-profit organizations, business interests, local government, elected officials and other interested parties. Research shows that a grass-roots approach produces better outcomes in program delivery.
- Building accountability and supporting investments in proven, time-tested strategies and delivery methods;
- Increasing cross-agency coordination, and reducing duplication or gaps in service;
- Maximizing investment of scarce tax dollars in programs that yield the greatest return; and
- Cultivating an environment of continuous quality improvement in local program providers and service delivery agencies through greater emphasis on performance measures and program evaluation.

Ultimately, these steps will positively affect the lives and future success of Wisconsin children and youth, reduce family stress, and improve efforts to address problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, poor school performance, violence, and teen pregnancy.

My name is Julie Chartier and I'm a parent from Niagara. In the past few years our school district has had to make a number of cuts. There is no longer a business education program or a FACE program. There was a 60% cut on a science teacher. These cuts have been at the high school level. Now we are being told that our district needs to make cuts again and already there is a lack of electives students in the high school can take, which is affecting all in grades 9-12.

My daughter, a sophomore, is a college-bound student. With the cuts that will need to be taken in the next couple of years, there will be classes she'll need, no longer available. My daughter is a top student in her class and she needs every opportunity to realize her goals. Our students in Niagara should be able to get the classes needed to be well prepared to enter college. I have a great concern for the education of my children. It shouldn't make a difference whether we live in Niagara, a rural community, or an urban area, like Milwaukee, where the number of students allows a much larger variety of classes available to these students. With the decline in our enrollment our school budget continues to become smaller. Not only am I concerned with my daughter's education, but also the education of my son, who is now in middle school. If the budget continues to shrink, what will it be like when my son is in high school? What classes will be available for him to take that will adequately prepare him to go on to higher education, whether it's college or a two year technical school?

My children deserve the best education, whether we live in northern Wisconsin or in the more populated southeastern part of our state.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify at this hearing.

My name is Judy Ball. I have been teaching in the Niagara Public Schools since 1971.

At the time I was hired, the Niagara school system was considered the premier school in northern Marinette and Florence counties and Dickinson County, Michigan. It was an honor to be employed in Niagara. It was a distinct advantage to be a student here.

The working conditions were excellent. We, as teachers, had access to all the materials that were necessary for our students to be successful. We were also able to acquire up - to - date materials. Our high school students were able to avail themselves of courses ranging from college preparatory to business to vocational.

Much of this is no longer available to the teachers and students. I have watched in agony as these changes have happened.

In my third grade class, I am using Language textbooks from 1986. The books are no longer in print. In the event that we need to replace them, we have to buy them from a used book supplier. Someone has gotten new books, but it isn't us! The accompanying workbooks are no longer available from the publisher. There is no more room on the inside cover for the student's name. We have to make an insert because we cannot afford to lose any books.

Last school year the third grade teachers spent many hours selecting and ordering new Language texts, only to receive letters during the summer informing us that since there was no money in the budget, our requisition was denied.

Our Science books have a copyright date of 1991. We have been looking for hands - on materials to enhance and update our texts. The staff spent many hours last year researching different science kits. We ordered kits for our classes. Sadly, we did not



receive them. How will we able to prepare our students for the future when they are already a decade behind?

The third grade Social Studies series was published in 1990. The books are in very poor condition. It is necessary to cover some of the books in an effort to hold them together. If that is not deplorable enough, the fourth grade books on Wisconsin were published in 1977. What a way to teach our future citizens about their state! We hope to order new books for the coming school year; however, we are not very optimistic that we will have them in the fall.

I have been teaching in Niagara long enough to have children of my former students. Should this generation of students have less opportunity for a good education than their parents? Is this progress?

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Ball

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judy Ball".

April 2, 2001

William and Donna Moreau  
W8665 Kallenbach Street  
Niagara, WI 54151  
(715)251-4152

To: Wisconsin's Legislation Joint Committee on Finance:

I am Donna Moreau. I reside at W8665 Kallenbach Street, in Niagara, WI. My husband and I are the parents of three children, one of which is currently enrolled in the Niagara District. The smaller two children will be attending Niagara in the near future. My daughter who is in the fourth grade will be experiencing a drastic change next year as she enters the fifth grade. For the past four years her grade level has been divided into three sections. Next year due to budget cuts, brought about from senate bill 55, her grade level will be combined into only two sections. Thus creating two overly populated classrooms where learning will be at a disadvantage. Cuts like these hurt our students.

My children's future looks mighty grim here in Niagara as cuts are continually being made. I see cuts being made all through the district. By the time my children reach the high school level there aren't going to be any classes left for them to take. Elective classes are extremely limited now, I hate to see what they will be like in future years at the rate Niagara has been cutting student classes.

In the past, people moving to the area praised Niagara for its outstanding school system. Now with all the cuts the district has had to make, Niagara is being overlooked by new residents who are moving into the neighboring Michigan cities where schools have more to offer.

Niagara needs your help. We are asking that you please consider all the facts and please don't overlook the problems we are having here in Niagara. My children, along with the other children of Niagara, are looking and counting on you for help.

I thank you very much for reading my letter and I trust that our school system will be a priority. Thanks again.

Sincerely,



Donna Moreau

Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee

April 3, 2001

Dear Committee Member,

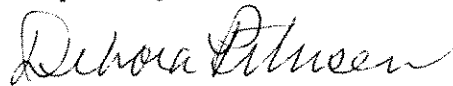
Hello, I am **Debora Petersen** a resident (N. 22555 Antonissen Rd. Niagara, WI) and employee of the Niagara School District. In 1986 we, my husband and myself, chose the Niagara Schools for our children when we transferred into the area. We did our homework and felt that Niagara was the school district that would best meet our children's needs. The school had done a wonderful job of maintaining small class sizes and yet offering a competitive amount of advanced and elective classes in the high school. Niagara also had state of the art technology available at all levels. This was a dream come true for our children.

As the years advanced I became employed as a Speech Pathologist for the district. It was an honor to work for such a school and community. The school and community were such a integral being. As years have advanced this has dissolved as the issue of tax increases have escalated. We are paying a high tax base and people are opting for Michigan to reside in over our Wisconsin schools. ( Michigan is only five miles away) Our little town is losing out. **WHY? Legislation is forgetting that our children are our most precious commodity. Schools are non-profit and I would like to see the powers of government survive on the stringent budgets that they have "Provided" for our Wisconsin schools.**

As a speech pathologist there are many issues that are affecting the well being of my program as a result of cutbacks due to legislation.

- Nursing expertise is a necessity.
- Lack of counseling due to cutbacks.
- Large class sizes impacting hearing impaired and auditory processing students.
- Lack of electives for our high school students.
- More and more ITV, which for specific auditory and language processing deficits, these are impossible to handle. Consequently the students do not take them.

Respectfully Submitted,



Debora Petersen , SLP, Proud Parent, & Taxpayer

Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee  
April 4, 2001

Dear Committee Member,

My name is Marjorie Brodersen and I am the Cognitive Disabilities/Severe Teacher with Niagara Public Schools. I have taught in Niagara for 28 years and have been very proud of the education we were able to offer our students. We were innovative in offering a Special Education Program for CD students before the age of three. We were able to serve students in neighboring Wisconsin districts and also a number of students from Michigan before they had something comparable. I have worked to make my Special Education program the best it possibly can be; to put the needs of the kids first.

Unfortunately I have been watching the decline of education in our district with cutbacks enforced over the past six years. I am especially concerned with the proposed reduction in my district of the school nursing program. I have two medically fragile students who have serious and changing needs. The school nurse has helped develop plans of care for them and is available and needed as new health concerns arise. I have had to call the nurse numerous times to help with a student who has swallowing difficulty and a student with seizures. I was most appreciative when she was available and guided the student's aide and myself through a serious episode. Our next step would have been to call for an ambulance. Fortunately that wasn't necessary.

Another area of concern is class size. With the lost of teaching staff, classroom sizes have and will increase. I have students who are in inclusionary and mainstreamed programs. Classrooms that are crowded do not allow my two wheelchair students much mobility. I have another student with autism spectrum disorder who does very well in a general classroom. Crowded classrooms will not help him or other students develop to their full potential.

I hope you will listen to the problems and concerns our small schools are facing and put the needs of our kids in the forefront. I am asking that you review your policy and remove revenue caps and allow local districts to generate more revenue or reallocate funds and make them available to our schools. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

*Marjorie Brodersen*  
*CD Teacher*

**Budget Hearing  
Joint Committee on Finance  
Peshtigo High School  
April 4, 2001**

Senator Burke, Representative Gard, Members of the Joint Committee on Finance:

My name is Richard Krumwiede, and I am the Director of the Outagamie Waupaca Library System (OWLS). I have come here today to testify about the state's role in providing public library service to the citizens of Wisconsin. Specifically, I want to talk about state aid to public library systems.

Public library service in Wisconsin has traditionally been provided by units of local government. While local libraries were generally responsive to the needs of local residents, many Wisconsin citizens lived in communities without libraries and, therefore, had no access to public library service. Furthermore, many municipal libraries lacked the resources necessary to adequately meet the demand for library services. Consequently, "to address the limitations of relying solely on municipalities to provide library services, the Legislature created the library system program" in 1971 (Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau 1988).

State supported public library systems were established in order "to improve and extend public library services, promote resource sharing among libraries, and increase access to library materials and services by the state's residents" (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 1991). It was the intent of the Legislature that state aid funds be used by systems "to coordinate and supplement library resources and services beyond what could be provided at the local and county levels" (Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau 1988).

To put it another way, the public library system program was designed to equalize the opportunity for all state residents to enjoy a reasonable level of public library service. State-funded public library systems were created as an incentive for municipal and county libraries to open their doors to non-residents and share their resources. The result has been a long-term partnership between the state and local units of government to provide accessible public library service in the state.

Over the past 25 years, this partnership has succeeded in making public library service available to all state residents and has continued to increase the quality and level of services available to the public. Peshtigo is a good example of this success story and the kind of library service that is now available to citizens. Local library patrons visiting the Peshtigo library can request have access to over 1.5 million items listed in their catalog, and patrons can have any of those items delivered within a few days. These same residents can use their local library cards to request or renew books, view electronic databases, or electronic books from their homes. All of this is possible because of state support for public library systems.

If statistics are any indication, we've done our job well. Public library service is very much used and valued by the citizens of Wisconsin. Do you know that in 1999 library users in Wisconsin borrowed over 46 million items from local public libraries? That's nearly 9 items for every man, woman, and child in the state. That same year, citizens made over 27 million visits to local libraries? Why that's more than 26 times the number of fans who attended Packer games last season. In fact, 232,000 more people attended book discussions, story hours, and other programs at public libraries in 1999 than attended Packers games last year. And I haven't even mentioned the number of reference questions answered, the times that people used library Internet workstations, or the searches made in electronic resources provided by public libraries. I'm sure you get my point—public libraries are very heavily used. That's the good news.

The bad news is that state support for public library services is not keeping pace with the demand for those services, nor is it keeping pace with the support provided by its partners, i.e., cities, villages, and counties. The obvious question is: What is the appropriate level for the state's contribution to this public library partnership? This question has been asked and answered several times over the years, usually as a result of a bipartisan study. Most recently, the Legislature passed legislation (1997) that directs the Department of Public Instruction to submit a budget request for public library system aids based on 13% of local expenditures for library service.

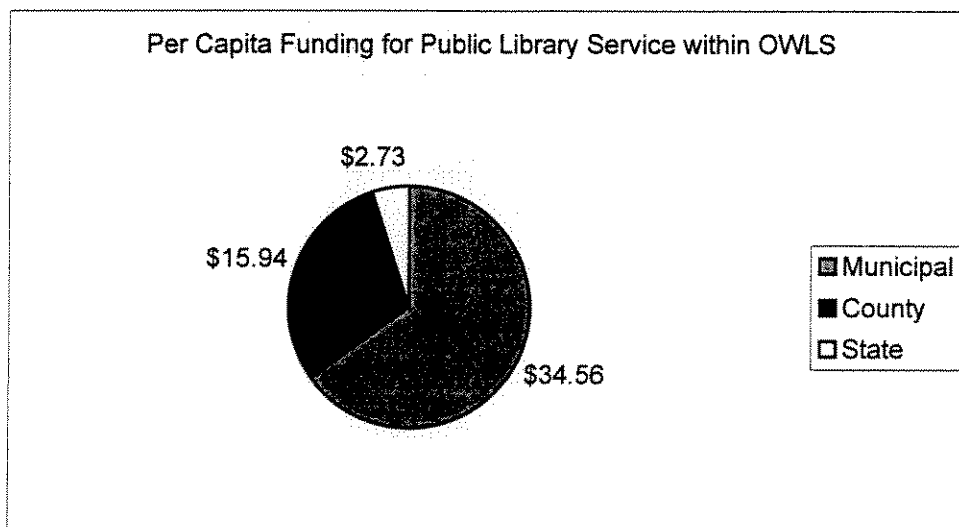
While the Legislature has regularly defined the level of funding that it should provide for public library services in its partnership with local government units, it has often failed to provide that funding. Currently, the state is funding public library systems at a level equal to approximately 10% percent of municipal and county funding for public library service. The Governor's budget proposes no increase in public library system aid in either year of the biennium. If his proposal is enacted, state support for public library services will erode to less than 9% of local expenditures. I believe it is important that state support for public library services not be allowed to erode further. Let me tell you two main reasons why state aid to public library systems needs to be increased.

First, systems provided essential, heavily used, mandated services to public libraries. Without an increase in aids, public library systems will be unable to maintain the services that they've spent years developing. For example, OWLS, in cooperation with the Nicolet Federated Library System, operates the computer network that serves 50 public libraries in 10 counties in Northeast Wisconsin. This network is only possible because of the partnership between systems and local libraries. Many of our member libraries are relatively small, would not be automated on their own, and rely on us to provide a full range of support including training, technical expertise, and troubleshooting during all their open hours. Believe me, we do this on a shoestring with very limited resources by using a combination of state and local funding. I've done the math, and I can tell you that without an increase in system aids we will have to raise the membership fees paid by libraries by approximately 10% in 2002 and 9% in 2003 in order to continue providing our current services.

Second, while public library system members receive the benefit of state-funded programs and services, membership also brings many obligations, some with significant costs. Local public libraries are required to serve all residents of their system areas. For many libraries this means providing a significant level of service for which no direct compensation is received. For example, in 2000 OWLS member libraries loaned over 280,000 items to patrons for which they received no compensation other than state-funded system services. This represented about 13% of their total circulation. Last year these libraries also interlibrary loaned over 122,000 items to other libraries. Again, they did this mostly in exchange for receiving public library system services.

My point here is that local library boards have to be able to tell their municipal governing bodies that the state-funded services they receive from public library systems are of an equal or greater value than the cost of the services that system membership obligates them to provide. Without increases in funding, systems will be unable to offer an acceptable level of service to their member libraries. Evidence of this growing problem is increasing. Counties have already left systems to join others in search of a higher level of services. Some libraries have threatened to quit systems, and a significant number of libraries have indicated that their systems are no longer able to offer an acceptable level of services to balance those that the libraries are obligated to provide. Without increased support, systems will face crises in their ability to satisfy their member libraries. If member libraries drop out of systems, access will be reduced, the state will be unable to achieve its goals, and the hard work of the last 25 years will be undone.

All this talk about public library system funding and the state's role as a partner in the provision of public library services is well and good, but let me tell you what it means in terms of real dollars for libraries in the Outagamie Waupaca Library System. In 1999, the cities and villages operating libraries in our two counties spent an average of \$34.56 per capita on public library service. This year Outagamie and Waupaca Counties will spend an average of \$15.94 per capita for public library services. And this year the State of Wisconsin will only spend \$2.73 per capita to support the Outagamie Waupaca Library System.



But that's not even the whole picture. OWLS currently receives more revenue in payments for services from member libraries (\$672,463) than it does in state aid (\$596,859).

The bottom line is that when state funding for public library service doesn't increase, additional costs are shifted to cities, villages, towns, and counties. It hardly seems appropriate for the state to reduce its share of support for an intergovernmental partnership with a structure that was designed by the Legislature. This also seems particularly inappropriate in a political environment that encourages intergovernmental cooperation and economies of scale. Unfortunately, public library service in Wisconsin could further diminish as the result of the Badger Basics proposal contained in the budget, which may provide a disincentive for municipalities to increase support for libraries because they are not defined to be essential services.

In conclusion, I urge you to increase public library system aid. I understand that the statutory amount request by the Department of Public Instruction is probably unrealistic in light of current fiscal constraints. However, I hope you will see library system funding in the proper perspective. For example, the state's total annual expenditure for public library services is less than 10% of the increase proposed in the Department of Correction's budget for the next biennium. I believe that a significant incremental increase in public library system aids is certainly justified and affordable. Also, please remember that failure to adequately fund library systems will only result in the further shifting of the costs of library service to already over-burdened units of local government. I urge you to be a strong partner in the effort to provide Wisconsin citizens with the access to information and knowledge they need to achieve their goals and to keep our democracy strong.

Thank you.

Richard Krumwiede



## Wisconsin's Joint Committee on Finance

April 5, 2001

Dear Committee Member:

My name is Mary Kay Guldswog, a special education teacher in the Niagara School District. I have been teaching for 24 years, with the last 23 being in the Niagara Schools. When I came to Niagara twenty-three years ago, I was extremely proud to be a part of a district and a state education system that cared about the quality of education for ALL ITS STUDENTS. Over the past six years, with the implementation of the revenue caps and the declining enrollment of rural schools, including ours, I have watched the quality of education slowly vanish in Niagara. I am here today to express my heartfelt concern over Senate Bill 55, and the likelihood that it will continue to destroy the quality of education for all students in the Niagara District and across the state.

With revenue controls in their sixth year, we continue to watch the Niagara School districts offerings dwindle, teaching staff cut, and special education services decreased as the district is forced to make budget cuts. These budget cuts directly affect the ability of this district to provide quality education at all levels, regular education and special education. At the same time we have seen an increase in the needs of special education students in order for them to become productive members of society, rather than a burden to society in the future.

I currently teach in two cross-categorical classrooms, grades K-5 and 9-12. Total enrollment in these two rooms is 32 students (19 at the high school and 13 in the elementary). Included within these classrooms are students with cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, and emotional disturbances. Within the past school year alone, one of these students tried to commit suicide, two students were hospitalized for treatment, one related to a behavioral disorder and one for drug and alcohol abuse, one student ran away, and two students were assigned individual aids to guard their safety and the safety of other students. Although these needs are severe, the revenue caps have forced the district to eliminate one half time counselor, leaving one counselor to service all grades K through 12, dismiss the request for a social worker, increase class sizes meaning less teacher/student time for those students in inclusive settings, loss of elective classes at the high school level including: the entire business department, the Family and Consumer Education program, a general math class, a 60% science teacher, and a keyboarding class, leaving virtually no electives for the non-college bound student.

As a special education teacher, I have been forced to become counselor, social worker, academic teacher, and life skills teacher for three categorical programs at one time. How can we say this is quality education?

And now we are asked to cut again. More proposed cuts for the 2001-2002 school year include: eliminating a 3<sup>rd</sup> section of the now 4<sup>th</sup>, next year 5<sup>th</sup> grade class, less sections of classes offered at the high school, reduced school nursing time, and elimination the early childhood program. How is it possible to meet our students' needs, when we continue to

see the offerings of our district spiral downward at an alarming rate? How can the state say they are committed to quality education for all students?

As a professional educator, who dearly loves working with all students regular and special education, I implore this committee to look at the testimony of each and every person that is here today and those at other hearings across the state; and to see that this bill will be a disservice to our students, the quality of education in our state, and the future of our nation as a whole.

I want to personally thank-you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. Wisconsin has always ranked among the highest in the nation when it comes to educating our young, we cannot continue to stay at the top with the passing of this bill.

Mary Kay Guldswog, EdS  
School District of Niagara  
700 Jefferson  
Niagara, WI 54151

  
Mary Kay Guldswog

My name is Kathryn Paul and I have been teaching Physical Education in Niagara for 28 years.

Rural schools are in deep trouble. We need money - we need a solution.

What it boils down to is that students needs are not being met.

How can students be the best that they can be when there is not the money to fund programs to benefit their interests?

We, as teachers, are here to broaden their horizons. Are we able to do that at this point in time?

Our students deserve a great education and adequate funding from the state.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Paul

HC2 Box 1085-C

Florence, Wisconsin 54121

April 4, 2001

To the members of the Joint Finance Committee:

My name is Carolyn Reimer. I live at 1300 Coolidge Avenue in Niagara, WI. I'm representing the parents of Niagara.

I graduated from Niagara High School and received a BA degree from the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater with a major in Accounting. I decided to pursue accounting after completion of a bookkeeping course in high school.

What a shame, today's Niagara Students don't have that opportunity. Accounting was cut from the curriculum four years ago.

My son, who is now a junior attending the University of Wisconsin – Madison, had signed up to take accounting in high school. Unfortunately, because of budget restraints, he was informed that it would not be offered. He is currently pursuing a degree in business. In order to be accepted into the School of Business at Madison, your grade point average has to be 3.2 or higher. Accounting is one of the courses my son had to take prior to acceptance. Without having the background in Accounting, he struggled and did not achieve the desired grade. When you are competing against the top students, not only from Wisconsin but throughout the country, you have to score well in each class. Even a "B" average isn't acceptable.

Accounting not only affects business students, but is used in many facets of life. Students that decide to work instead of pursuing a degree are also affected.

This is just one cut of many. It just happens to be one that hurt our child. How many others have been affected by the cuts that have been made? Is it fair that because we live in a small community, the education of our children should be limited?

Please help us change the current funding of our schools. We know we are one of many who have been affected by budget restraints. Wisconsin has always scored well when compared to the other states. We've shown that we care about education. Don't let this change. Help our children!

Thank you,

*Carolyn Reimer*

Carolyn Reimer

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. We are members of the Florence High School Student Council representing sophomore class of 2002-2003. Just as all men were created equal we feel the same way about students. We feel that students of Florence High School should have the same opportunity as other schools despite the fact that they are larger than us.

As of right now nine teachers have been cut and not replaced not to mention the eight teachers who have left to make more money elsewhere on the average approximately 4,000 dollars more. How can we have extra curricular classes when we cannot afford the teachers to pay them. How is a county like Florence supposed to attract people when we cannot provide them with an adequate education for their children? As of right now there are 33 students enrolled in kindergarten we have approximately 60. This is proof that enrollment has dropped dramatically yet the cost of running our school is still the same. So in effect not only does the low revenue cap per student hurt the school it also hurts the town as a whole.

The state average for revenue limit per student is 7,060 where as Florence County's revenue limit is 6,790. However if I were a student in Nicolet Union High School I would have a revenue limit of 12,614. How can two students in the same state be valued at such a great difference? With the way the financial plan is working now the Florence County School systems will be bankrupt in April of 2002-2003. Therefore I am not sure how I will graduate. I will have put twelve hard years of school in. Not only that but to deny me the right to graduate with my friends I have known most my life. Not to mention the few teachers who have stayed here and I have depended on.

My plans for the future is to attend a respectable college, get a good job, and support and raise a family. A simple dream, but as sad as this may sound if things keep going the way they are it is very unlikely to do any of the above unless I deroot my self and leave every thing I have ever

known so I can receive and better education which includes more extracurricular activities and higher classes. I myself believe you will do the right thing and increase the revenue cap per student so I may continue to attend Florence County High School and pursue my dreams.

Thank You,

Jake Klee

Hc 3 Box 168

Florence, Wisconsin

54121

To: State Joint Finance Committee

Dear Committee Members,

Good morning. I am Dan St. Arnauld, an economics , psychology, and American government teacher. I am a husband, father of a 13-year-old and have had four foster children. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to address you concerning the impact that the Governor's budget has had on education in Niagara.

Picture this scene. It is a Saturday in the fall of the year; the Michigan Wolverines are in town to play Wisconsin. However, the scenario includes the Wisconsin-Oshkosh Titans, not the Wisconsin Badgers. The outcome is never in doubt, as Michigan destroys Wisconsin-Oshkosh. This scene is repeated on the border of Wisconsin and Michigan every day when it comes to education.

Wisconsin has prided itself on attracting business and Industry to our state over the past decade. We have heavily promoted our tourism industry, wanting to lure families to Wisconsin. Therefore, it's ironic that when education is the issue we do not (or will not) promote or properly support Wisconsin schools. Niagara is located on the border of Michigan, and we must compete with their schools to attract families that are moving into the area. What incentive can we give to these families to choose Niagara for a community and school.

As an economics teacher, I teach my students about incentives and competition. First, what is the incentive to establish a family and home in Niagara? You have heard about many of the cuts that already have taken place in Niagara. Would you send your children to Niagara, when Iron Mountain or Kingsford can provide opportunities that we can not offer?

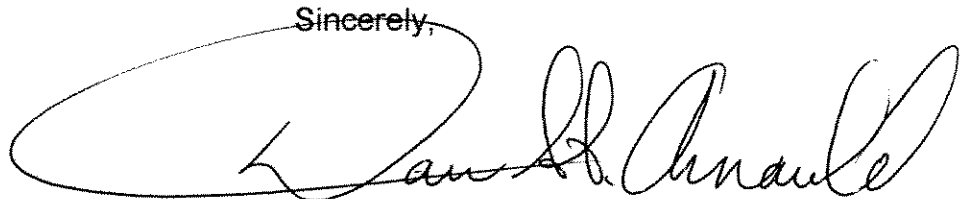
We are in competition with our neighbors to the north. This budget, along with past budgets, has made it very difficult for Niagara to compete for families to move to our community and school district. Did you know that retired military personnel do not pay state income taxes on their pensions when they live in Michigan? Did you know that the tax rate in Michigan is less than it is in Wisconsin? Did you know that teachers with the same experience and same education are paid more in the Iron Mountain and Kingsford districts than those of us working in Niagara? Why would anyone want to live on this side of the river? With the current system, how can Niagara compete to attract teachers or families.

It would be embarrassing to send Wisconsin-Oshkosh against Michigan to play a football game. My guess is that the legislators would quickly remedy that situation. They would create a system that would allow Oshkosh to compete with Michigan. Why then aren't the legislators embarrassed when it comes to our students? The question begs for an answer. Do our legislators want our students to have the same opportunities as our Michigan counterparts, if not better?

The economics teacher in me tells me that it all comes down to money. Where are the priorities of our legislators when it comes to our children?

I would like to thank you and the members of the Joint Finance Committee for giving me the opportunity to testify here today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan St. Arnauld". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "D" and "A".

Dan St. Arnauld



To: Wisconsin's Legislature Joint Committee on Finance  
From: Debra Blazonin Pajula, EdS  
CD/ED/LD Teacher from Niagara Schools  
Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 55  
Date: April 1, 2001

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Debra Pajula, and I am a special needs teacher in Niagara, Wi. I have taught in the field of special education for the past 24 years, with the last 17 being in Niagara. I teach students from grades K-5 and 9-12, who have learning, emotional, or cognitive disabilities.

I am writing this in opposition to Senate Bill 55, which has greatly NEGATIVELY impacted the pupil services/special needs department in Niagara. Special Needs Students begin their schooling with a disadvantage, and your legislation has further handicapped them.

I pose these questions to you: *How can I meet the diverse and intensive needs of my special needs students? How can I prepare them so that they can find success in life, both personally and vocationally?* I ask these questions based upon the following facts about Niagara High School, which is where most of the negative impact of your legislation has been felt thus far.

1. One special education teacher services students in grades 9-12.
  - a. 27 LD/CD/ED students from grades 9-12 in 1999-2000
  - b. 19 students in 2000-2001, with more being added through the referral process. Projected enrollment for 2000-2001 is 20.
  - c. One part time aide is provided.
  - d. One program is provided for all ED/LD/CD students with needs ranging from mild to severe.
    1. Current enrollment in the high school program:  
3 CD students, 8 LD students, 7 ED students 1 OHI student
2. The needs of the students are much more intensive than ever. To emphasize these needs, I will share some events of the past two weeks being dealt with in our classroom. We had one suicide attempt, one student go into a treatment facility for drug and alcohol abuse, and one student attempt to run away from home. These are in addition to the day to day social, emotional and academic needs of all the rest. Yet, there are limited support services available to these students.
  - a) Niagara cannot afford a social worker, so the special education teachers carry out this role as much as possible.
  - b) Niagara has lost a counseling position, therefore the current counselor services students K - 12 and is *very* overloaded.
  - c) Niagara cannot afford program support teachers to assist in programming students to assist with severe needs.

- d) Niagara has lost all remedial classes. More referrals are generated because there is no help for at-risk students other than special education programming.
- e) Niagara's special education staff do their own IEP evaluations and reporting. This has to be done after contract hours or time is taken away from the students.
- f) A proposed cut for 2000-2001 is the school nurse, who services many special needs students.
- g) DVR has lost funding and has not visited our school yet this year.

3. Federal and State Law requires transition to be a part of the IEP, so that special needs students can be successful in life after high school, both personally and vocationally. The following facts tell how Bill 55 has further handicapped our students, and made good transitioning a near impossible task. *How will these students compete in the very competitive job market?*

- h) Niagara lost its general math class, therefore incoming freshman who can not handle algebra do not have a math class available.
- i) Niagara has lost its business education courses.
- j) Niagara has lost its keyboarding class.
- k) Niagara has one computer application course which students can't take until their junior year due to upper classman filling the course. That is, they can take it if it fits into a schedule which is very limiting, because course offerings are extremely limited.
- l) Niagara's shop and art classes are overloaded, therefore, it is difficult for special needs students to get the help that they need in order to succeed. These classes are overloaded because these are the electives available.
- m) Niagara lost its FACE classes; currently one semester of FACE is provided through the NDEN television. Special needs students don't do well with an instructor who teaches over the TV. Most need the personal contact, and hands on instruction that is multi-sensory.
- n) The special education room has one computer that has internet access. Technology is the way of the future, but not for Niagara's special needs students.

Based upon these facts I ask you: *How can I meet the diverse and intensive needs of my special needs students?*

*How can I prepare them so that they can find success in life, both personally and vocationally?*

Thank you very much for the opportunity to inform you of the grave situation facing Niagara's special education population. Your action to positively change this situation would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Debra Blazonin Pajula, EdS