

D

April 5, 2001

I am a lifelong resident of Kingsford, Michigan, just across the border from Niagara, Wisconsin. I student taught in Niagara in 1975, and was honored to be offered a position there in 1981. My 21 years with the Niagara Public Schools have been most fulfilling.

When I first had my own children, I used to think how nice it would be if they could attend a school like Niagara -- where teachers truly care, quality courses are offered, small class size is a priority, and the total school population is small enough that every student is sure to be recognized for whatever talents he/she might have.

For all these reasons, Niagara was the area's "school of choice". I say "was" not because the teachers have changed, or talents are no longer recognized -- but because, thanks to inadequate state funding, we are losing our ability to keep class size small and provide course offerings necessary for our students to move on to continue their education and/or be adequately prepared for the job market.

My own children are currently attending school where we still live, in Kingsford. I have found that the teachers at my children's school do seem to care, countless quality courses are offered, small class size is (so far) a priority, but, the large school population is such that not every student is recognized for the talents he/she might have.

My fear is that, as Niagara's students advance to higher grade levels, where needed courses are no longer available, parents will be forced to make difficult decisions in order to find other places, like Kingsford, in which to educate their children. Niagara, "school of choice", with teachers who truly care and where every student is sure to be recognized for whatever talents he/she might have, will no longer exist. The future of all of Wisconsin's precious small schools is in your hands.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mrs. Joy A. Nasi Niagara First Grade

Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance
Thursday, April 5, 2001

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Benetta Phare. I teach in Niagara, Wisconsin for the Niagara Public Schools. I am the Reading Specialist, Title 1 Teacher at the elementary school, and the seventh grade Family and Consumer Education Teacher at the middle school. I would like to encourage you to remove the revenue cap that is currently restricting the budgets of our public schools in Wisconsin. These restrictions have affected my Title One Program, the seventh through twelfth grade Family and Consumer Education Program, the extra teacher for smaller class sizes, and the implementation of new programs.

We, at Niagara, have spent hours to comply and institute all of the standards set forth by the state and federal governments. We have coordinated our curriculum to the state standards to provide the best education possible for our students. Yet, there is still little regard for our public school when it comes to having the funds to purchase the necessary equipment, academic materials, and the teaching staff to implement the programs to fulfill the state standards. **Why? Because of the Restrictions of the State Cap on Public School Education!**

Since 1995, cuts in our district have continued on a yearly basis. My Title One aide was cut three years ago. This cut caused me to drop three very successful reading programs for my students, due to the fact that my time must be spent helping all of the twenty-seven plus students I see during the morning. I have a combined inclusion and pull out program in order to meet the needs of my students. Without the help of my Title One Aide, I spend most of my free time doing paper work. Many days I do not have any breaks at all. While her position was cut, the needs and the number of students I see has not. **Why did I loose my Title 1 Aide? Because of the Restrictions of the State Cap on Public School Education!**

1999, during the afternoon, I was working with the seventh and eighth graders in the middle school with reading, study skills, and learning styles. At the end of first semester, the middle and high school Family and Consumer Education Teacher retired and her position was not filled. At this time, the F.A.C.E. position was added to my teaching position to maintain a rotation for extra curricular scheduling purposes. I tried to give the students a hands on experience in career planning, budgeting their money, home designing and decoration, family problem solving, cooking and party planning, and sewing through a family grouping program. The students need to learn these valuable life skills. Looking at society in general, we can see that the students need these valuable skills but they need to be able to take this F.A.C.E. class from seventh through twelfth grade from a certified teacher. The only qualifications I have in this area are those of being a mother, housewife, grandmother, and a teacher. I try to do the best I can but this program needs to be reinstated. **Why is the F.A.C.E. program gone? Because of the Restrictions of the State Cap on Public School Education!**

While evaluating our third grade testing results in the 1990's, the elementary teachers decided to research reading programs statewide as well as in Michigan. After extensive investigation, as a professional staff we decided on a reading series that was based on the reading recovery program, incorporated the Story Lords reading strategies, had an interdisciplinary literature based thematic and writing program, and a phonetic component. Looking at current reading research, the district also felt it was in the best interest of the students to begin an extra elementary class to keep the class sizes small. The district has tried to make this a priority to provide more one on one teacher contact. Since we instituted smaller class sizes, we have seen an increase in our third grade test scores, maintaining a district average that has been above the state average since 1995. This year, due to the revenue cap, we will be losing the teacher who has provided the elementary school with the extra classroom to keep our class sizes small. **Why? Because of the Restrictions of the State Cap on Public School Education!**

(Over)

We looked at the Accelerated Reading Program to help as many students as possible within the school setting. With the support of the teachers, the district, and the elementary parent group we decided to implement this program. I was using "Beanie Reading Pals" as an incentive in my Monthly Title One Reading Program. However, there were no funds available for the Accelerated Reading program. With the help of many of the parents of the school district, the community, and some senior citizens, we were able to make and sell enough "Beanie Reading Pals" at \$5.00 each to raise the needed \$3000 plus dollars to purchase the program for the elementary, middle, and high school. With the help of the Library aide, who runs the elementary library, parents, and high school tutors, we have been able to go through a thousand plus books in our library this year and customize reading test disks to the books we already have. These disks were purchased with some funds we received from the Goals 2000 moneys. However, the majority of the test disks have been purchased with funds that have been made from the continuing production of our "Beanie Reading Pals" and the dedication of our parents providing food for our bake sales. The Accelerated Reading program has been very successful. However, it seems unfair that these same parents have to provide baked products, their time to make the items, and send money with their children to purchase these same items back in order to implement and maintain a reading program for their children and the district's students. **Why? Because of the Restrictions of the State Cap on Public School Education!**

I believe that parents need to be involved in programs within the school and in their children's lives. I also believe that it takes a community to raise a child. That is not more evident than in the Niagara Public Schools. We are a small community and the school is the hub of the community. It is utilized by community student and adult groups, sporting events, the Destination Imagination groups, the senior citizens, the business' in the area, to host extra curricular activities, community events, the regional science fair, an extension facility for State Universities, and for the community walking program. The "Niagara Public Schools" are the students, the parents, the families, and the community of Niagara. The families of Niagara deserve to have a quality education for their students, One that will enable them to be lifelong competitive learners and contributing members of society. While the Families of Niagara are doing their part, the state continues to take these same parents tax dollars for education and in return give only a small portion back to their school. **Why? Because of the Restrictions of the State Cap on Public School Education!**

OUR CHILDREN DESERVE BETTER FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN!!

Respectfully submitted by,

Mrs. Benetta Phare

Mrs. Benetta Phare
Reading Specialist
Title I Teacher
Seventh Grade Family and Consumer Education Teacher

Dear Sir or Madom:

Niagara Public School Systems are in great financial despair. We have and are continuing to have many classes and extracurricular activities cut. Many of our education providers are facing a loss of jobs, and therefore our students are getting a poorer quality education over time.

Please help our situation by allowing our school board rather than the state set a reasonable budget. Thank you for taking the time to take our requests into consideration.

Sincerely,

We need your HELP!
Steven
Jarvis

Alexis
Osborne
Codry Kampe

Amy
Radakovich

Stephanie
Justin Chretien Baker

Andrea Bjorkman

John Prout
Elissa

Michael
Boileau
Darren
Vandenb

Travis
Paquette
HELP!!!
535

McMahon
Help'o's (Please)

Ryan Moll
Ariel Dunlap

The Niagara seventh grade students.

April 4, 2001

Steve Godfrey
1007 Scott Street
Niagara, WI 54151

Hi,

I graduated from Niagara High School in 1998. After attending college at the University of Wisconsin for three years, I have come to realize the importance of the advanced classes I took while in high school. Calculus, advanced chemistry and advanced biology were each extremely valuable and critical to my success in college. If I had not taken high school calculus, I may have struggled with the college calculus courses. Instead of understanding the details and mastering the subject, I would have been struggling with the basics of calculus. Most students enrolled in college calculus courses have been previously introduced to the subject. Those students seeing calculus for the first time in college have a difficult time competing in courses where there is a curve based grading scale. The advanced chemistry class I took in high school was also very important during my college career. The analytical chemistry course I took in college required knowledge of lab techniques and procedures critical to obtaining optimal products. If I had not been introduced to some of these techniques in high school, I would have been at a severe disadvantage to my college classmates. Finally, the advanced biology course I took in high school was important in introducing me to the basics of human and animal anatomy. This knowledge has been useful in a number of college courses including biology and physiology.

I strongly feel that these advanced high school classes must continue in the smaller schools of Wisconsin. Not only do they help students prepare for and test into college, but also they are necessary to the success that students hope to obtain. Without these courses, the tough competition students face when applying to medical or pharmacy schools will become even greater as they find themselves less prepared than their competition. If these advanced programs are cut, smaller high schools are no longer providing their students with the same opportunity as provided by larger high schools. It is critical that all schools retain their advanced classes to prepare students for the intense competition they will receive after high school.

Steve Godfrey

April 5, 2001

Dawn Godfrey
1007 Scott Street
Niagara, WI 54151

Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee:

I am a resident of Niagara and I'm also employed by Niagara Public Schools as part of their support staff.

Every student deserves a good education, which should include advanced classes for students going on to college. They need these classes to stay competitive with other students. Also a variety of electives are needed for students who are not sure what to do or what field of study to go into when they graduate from high school. They need to experience a variety of classes to give them an idea on what to pursue for their future.

The school is basically the backbone of a community. Once the school is weakened by cutting courses, having larger class sizes, books in bad condition and outdated, etc. All of this is affecting the growth in our community. Potential buyers for homes are passing Niagara by for the two larger towns of Iron Mountain & Kingsford Michigan, just minutes away. They offer schools with a far superior choice of electives. Parents want the best education for their children and they will move and live in the communities with the best schools. Please help us to make Niagara Schools a school where parents would want their children to attend.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dawn Godfrey".

Dawn Godfrey

My name is Lois A. Chartier, 433 Lincoln Ave, Niagara, Wisconsin. I am representing Niagara School System.

I am a grandmother of six grandchildren, all of school age. I have two in the Niagara School System. The granddaughter is a honor student as a sophomore. It would be a shame if she couldn't continue to get the courses she needs to be ready, willing and able to attend the college she wants when the time comes.

My grandson, seventh grade, is (ADHD) Attention Deficit Hyperactive. School is a challenge to him everyday. If schools do not have enough funding from the state, fewer and fewer children with his condition will be identified at an early age. Children like this will become frustrated, punished for things they cannot help, drop out of school discouraged and angry. I've been told that the prisons are full of these kinds of kids.

Money not spent now, will have to be spent later, if this kind of child is not properly diagnosed and given the proper attention as they go through the system.

My grandson needs a great school to keep him on track so he will become a productive citizen and not a liability of the state.

Money Spent On Schools Is Never Money Miss-spent!

Thank you.

My name is Dennis L. Chartier, 433 Lincoln Ave. , Niagara, Wisconsin. I am representing Niagara School System. I am a grandfather with two grandchildren in the system presently.

The Niagara School System was highly rated for years and years. I graduated from Niagara High School 47 years ago. When people come to work at the paper mill here, they have a choice to live in Michigan or Wisconsin as Niagara is situated on the Border. The reason they very often pick Niagara is for the fine school system we have always had here in Niagara. Niagara's system, though small, has produced many prominent people, doctors, lawyers, business leaders, a two star general in the Air Force and many other successful professionals. There has always been pride in our school system.

It would be detrimental to the students, the school, and the community if there was not enough funding to continue and improve the Niagara School System and all the others in the State of Wisconsin.

Good Schools Are Always Worth The Price!

Thank you.

My name is Jim Starr and I am from Niagara, Wisconsin. I am the Technology Education instructor at Niagara High School. My classes include two woodshop classes and two beginning drafting classes.

In the interest of the students I am concerned about their safety due to the over 50 year old power tools that are still being used in our woodshop classes. These power tools when designed did not have some of the safety guards that are standard equipment on all power tools manufactured today.

With our tight budgets I am unable to update this equipment and feel confident that my students will not injure themselves while using this equipment.

I think it is time we consider the safety of our students and think how would you like your children operating tools like this in their schools.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jim Starr

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Starr". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the printed name "Jim Starr".

Michael Prost
W8608 Becky Lane
Niagara, WI 54151
April 2, 2001

Dear Joint Finance Committee;

My name is Michael Prost and I live in Niagara, Wisconsin. I teach Health and Physical Education for grades 6-12 at the Niagara Public Schools. I have been teaching Health and Physical Education at Niagara since 1977. During the last seven years I have been teaching middle school and high school health education classes in other teacher's classroom because I do not have a classroom for myself. I share three other teachers classroom during the course of the day. That means that I have to haul all my materials from one place to the next.

Our school is in need of financial assistance. This proposed budget wants to tighten-up the revenue cap and take more power away from the state superintendent. That cannot happen!

During the last few years, the revenue cap has cost our school system many programs. We have no business education classes at Niagara, one FACE class in grades 6-12, no Tennis or Freshmen basketball program. The list goes on and on. Niagara used to be a top-notch school, but with all the cutbacks over the last few years we are consistently losing ground and our curriculum is faltering.

I have been organizing basketball tournaments for many years. Some of these monies earned help to supplement the athletic programs. How can we continue at this pace? We have lost so much already. Do we want to lose more? I hope not.

Thank you.



Michael Prost

Mandi Ponzio
201 Washington Ave.
Niagara, WI 54151

April 4, 2001

Dear Legislator,

My name is Mandi Ponzio and I am a sophomore at Niagara High School. I am an honor student and involved with several extra-curricular activities such as forensics, student government and One Act Play. I am writing this on behalf of all the students that attend Niagara High School.

As a gifted student, I have seen many programs that I had hoped to enroll in be cut from the district. Some of these include Calculus, Business Education, Drama Class and Publications. I also have witnessed my town being divided over the issues associated with this cut in funding and programs. While many of the proposed cuts were not made I now see the future is not so bright.

Along with the loss of classes in my district, the loss of extra-curricular activities will play an even more pertinent role in the overall education at Niagara High School. I believe one of the most valuable programs is Forensics, as a quarter of the schools population participates in the program. This fact is only one reason I feel forensics is very important. We have no speech classes in our curriculum. Forensics offers students the opportunity to refine their speech habits and become better public speakers in general. However, my support of the program extends farther than this. Because of my experience with the forensics program last year I was asked by the political party I spoke about, The Natural Law Party of America, to address their national nominating convention. I went to Washington DC and spoke on national television about how important it is for young people be to be involved in the political process. This never would have been possible without the forensics program at my school.

There are so many more programs that are important to students. Programs that teach students more than any class could. The greatest gift someone can give a child is an education. I beg you not to take this right away from Wisconsin's children.

Sincerely,



Mandi Ponzio

April 04, 2001

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance,

My name is Susan Wilson. I am an elementary teacher in the Niagara Public Schools. I am also a concerned grandparent who wants a great education for my grandchildren.

I am writing to you today because I am so concerned about what the revenue caps are doing to my school and the other schools in Wisconsin.

My father was a poor German immigrant who came to this country as a child. At that time, people believed in "The American Dream." My father was told that he could be anything he wanted to be even though he lived in a garage without running water. My father worked hard and graduated from high school. Even back in the 1940's, his high school offered debate, blue print reading, advanced math courses, and many other electives. Because my father had the chance to attend a good high school, he was able to get a good job and send his five children to college.

I want "The American Dream" for the children of Niagara. I want them to grow up thinking that they can be anything that they want to be, but the revenue caps are stealing away the dreams of our kids.

A public school education gives all kids a chance-the poor child, the immigrant child, the middle class child, everyone. And for most children, the public schools are their only chance. The public schools are what has made America strong and great. They are what has made Wisconsin such a wonderful state in which to live. Just because we live in the northern tier- so far away from Madison -our kids should not be treated like second class citizens. They deserve the classes, the supplies, and the opportunities that will prepare them to go to college, enter the labor market, and realize their dreams.

I have been so proud to be a Wisconsin teacher. Wisconsin always scores first or second in the nation in academic testing. In order to stay great, we need to keep funding our schools.

When I first started teaching in Niagara, I was able to buy microscopes, balances, and other kinds of science equipment for my classroom. Now we don't have the money to update our equipment. The most effective way to teach science is with the "hands on " approach. My colleagues and I spent two years trying out science kits, taking seminars, and reading about

different programs so that we could make an informed decision about purchasing new science equipment. After all of this time and effort, we were told that we did not have the money to purchase any of the materials that we wanted. The students of Niagara lost a learning opportunity.

My teaching partner and I spent many hours reading language textbooks so that we could choose a good one to replace our old (copyright 1986), worn out books. After spending many hours reading and discussing, we chose our books. We were so excited about the new language book because it had such a terrific writing program. During the summer, I received a letter from my building principal informing me that regrettably the books had been cut due to budget cuts. The children of Niagara Elementary lost a learning opportunity again.

Ever since we adopted our reading books, I have been trying to get the computer software that goes with the reading program. The software reinforces concepts, provides additional skill practice, extends the information about scientific topics, and enables the students to learn how to use different computer applications. I have never been able to order the software because the programs exceed our budget. The students of Niagara Elementary lost another learning opportunity again.

Please start funding schools in Wisconsin adequately. All children deserve the chance to get a good education, and they only get one chance. All children should be able to be the best that they can be which is "The American Dream".

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan K. Wilson".

Susan K. Wilson

Testimony before the Joint Finance Committee
Of the Wisconsin Assembly and Senate
April 5, 2001
Peshtigo, WI

Members of the Committee, my name is Mark Merrifield, and I am a resident of the City of DePere. As the Director of the Nicolet Federated Library System, one of 17 Systems established and funded by the state of Wisconsin, I am here today to speak in favor of increased library funding, specifically for the four statewide contracts.

The four contracts in question include:

1. Wisconsin Library Services (WiLS)
2. Milwaukee Public Library/Interlibrary Loan (MPL)
3. Wisconsin Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
4. The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC)

Each of these contracts is maintained in accordance with S. 43.03 (7), Wisconsin State Statutes. This statute requires the State Superintendent to contract for services with libraries and other resource providers that will serve as resources of specialized library materials and information not available in Wisconsin's public libraries or the Reference and Loan Library located in Madison.

I am pleased that the Joint Finance Committee is meeting in Peshtigo. Not far from this school is the Peshtigo Branch of the Marinette County Consolidated Library System. The Peshtigo Branch Library is not unlike many of the libraries in the predominantly rural area of northeast Wisconsin that the Nicolet Federated Library System serves. Sharing of scarce resources has been enhanced in Peshtigo when it was recently brought into the two-system automation project of the Outagamie Waupaca Library System, called OWLSnet. Along with the collection of the Brown County Library in Green Bay, library materials are shared between the 10 county region that stretches from Appleton to Florence. In the Nicolet System alone, nearly 500,000 items were shared between the libraries. This means that a Peshtigo resident has access to a book collection of over 2 million items.

While this resource sharing has proven to be extremely effective in this region, it has had the most impact on the small rural libraries like Peshtigo. However, even within the 10-county Outagamie Waupaca and Nicolet Federated Library Systems region, there are specialized materials that cannot be located. Library users, be they students looking for information for a research paper; an adult seeking specialized medical information; a blind person needing Braille materials; or a company doing research about a new product or process, they will likely end up needing to use the services provided by one or several of the statewide resource contract providers listed above.

The Milwaukee Public Library/Interlibrary Loan service provides many of the items not found in local libraries. Utilizing the Interlibrary Loan service, library Systems borrow items from Milwaukee Public Library for library users located throughout the state. The collection of the Milwaukee Public Library is extensive, and many of the items being sought can be filled by this library, sent via delivery service to the 17 library Systems, which act as clearinghouses for interlibrary loans, and are then delivered to the local public libraries. However, even the Milwaukee Public Library with its extensive collections does not have all the items being sought by library users, and that is when library Systems turn to the Wisconsin Library Services (WiLS).

Wisconsin Library Services (WiLS) is often the agency library Systems in Wisconsin turn to when an item cannot be located elsewhere in the state. Using its extensive search capabilities, WiLS will locate an item for a user in collections nationwide. On behalf of the Systems, WiLS borrows these unique items from libraries and research collections located all over the United States, as well as internationally.

In rural areas like Peshtigo, as well as in other communities both large and small across the state, the need for library materials for the blind and physically handicapped continues to grow. While most libraries try to maintain up-to-date collections for their users, it is very difficult to maintain collections that meet the needs of blind or physically handicapped individuals, whose information and reading needs are just as important to meet. Under s. 43.03 (6), Wisconsin State Statutes, the State Superintendent is required to contract annually with a public library for the provision of library services to physically handicapped persons, including the blind and physically handicapped. Since 1961 this contract has been maintained with the **Wisconsin Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped**, which is located in the Milwaukee Public Library. The Milwaukee Public Library provides the specialized materials for library users throughout the state. Maintaining this collection and keeping it stocked with up to date materials for children as well as adults provides users statewide with a wide variety of recreational and informational materials in formats such as Braille and "books on tape". Sharing these resources is cost effective, since the regional Library maintains a collection that is shared throughout the state, eliminating the need for libraries throughout the state to stock these items.

Finally, the **Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC)** is a repository of children's tradebooks used by children's librarians and teachers throughout the state. The staff of CCBC is often called on to assist librarians as they develop new collections, and is a clearinghouse of information on children's literature. Providing guidance to librarians on the selection of quality materials, the staff of CCBC also provides assistance to public and school libraries, both large and small, on issues related to challenges and freedom of information. For a library like Peshtigo for instance, the CCBC staff can provide recommended reading lists, as well as guidance on how to select children's materials within certain subject area.

Each of these four statewide resource contracts provides needed services to libraries and library users across Wisconsin. Continued full funding of these four contracts will assure that there will continue to be access to everyone in the state to the specialized materials and resources that are unavailable in most communities.

Fiscal impact:

\$1,144,600 in FY 2001-2002, and increase of \$97,300 over 2000-2001

\$1,334,200 in FY 2002-2003, and increase of \$286,900* over 2000-2001

(* Funding for the Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped includes a one-time cost of \$161,600 to replace an automated system in the second year of the biennium.)

In conclusion, I want to thank you for having this meeting in Peshtigo. I also thank you for listening to the concerns that library users have, that the access to specialized information such as current materials for the blind, and hard-to-find information related to health, business, and other topics will not be put in jeopardy. Wisconsin's library Systems and public libraries have been using state dollars wisely and effectively in resource sharing activities. Yet many materials are still very difficult to locate in our area. The services to Wisconsin's libraries and library users provided under the four statewide resource contracts means that rural users like those in Peshtigo have the same access to information and recreational reading resources that urban libraries may have. Though the fiscal impact is modest compared to the total budget, the impact on the uses of local libraries is enormous. Please fully fund the statewide resource library contracts.

Thank you.

Debbie and Randy Wodenka
200 Fifth Street
Niagara, Wisconsin 54151

April 5, 2001

Dear Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee Members,

As parents of two high school students and one college freshman, we are very concerned with the quality of education being provided here in the northern School District of Niagara.

All of our children, since the eighth grade, have chosen a college prep course of study. In her senior year, our oldest daughter was told that due to budget cuts, Advanced Biology and Advanced Chemistry were no longer full year courses, but were now only one semester each, and also that the Calculus class would not be offered in Niagara. Calculus was offered over the NDEN system, which turned out to be very frustrating for her, since we had no teacher in our system that could support the use of the graphing calculator. Last year, Calculus was not even offered in our high school at all. The future status of these classes is always in question.

The existence of these high-end courses is always threatened, mainly because the "numbers" of interested students does not warrant it. These classes are just as important and necessary in today's collegiate world, as the special education programs being mandated for the special needs children in our school system, and just as important as programs being offered to non-college bound students. Why are none of these college prep or business classes (which have all been completely eliminated) mandated by any of your legislation?

Many programs in our school district have been eliminated, making our curriculum and sports offerings much less desirable than neighboring Wisconsin and Michigan school districts. Without the dollars to offer comparable and competitive programs, we cannot attract new people to our district. Without these same dollars, we are finding it very difficult to maintain the "bare-bones" programs that we now have, causing us to lose existing students to neighboring school districts. This is a fact that makes things look very dismal here, in a time when the amount of *my* tax dollars that comes back into *my* school district is so dependent on "head count".

Being the small school district that we are, with a continuing trend of declining enrollment, the quality of the educational program and extra-curricular offerings that we can afford to provide our children has suffered greatly over the past six years. This is apparently due to necessary budget cuts, which have been forced upon our School Board and administration by different legislative actions taken in Madison. These legislative actions, in and of themselves, may not be all bad. But combining such things as increased costs of new and existing mandated programs, the imposed revenue cap, and decreased state aid due to changes in "the formula" and our declining enrollment, makes it almost impossible to offer our children a curriculum comparable to that of other Wisconsin school districts.

The children of our small school district should be given the same educational opportunities as all other children throughout our great state. Please support ALL the children of Wisconsin in making education your top priority. *Every kid deserves a great school!*

Thank you for taking the time to read these letters, and to listen to the people from Niagara.

Sincerely,



Debra R. Wodenka



Francis (Randy) R. Wodenka

April 4, 2001

Dear Wisconsin State Joint Finance Committee Members:

My name is Sharon Antonissen. My husband and I own and operate a dairy farm in the Township of Niagara. Our farm was established in 1911, by my husband's grandfather. My children are the fourth generation to live on our farm. We are proud residents of Niagara, and we hope that our children will continue to be able to grow and learn in the school of our family home. My husband, David, and I are both graduates of Niagara High School. My husband was fortunate to be able to continue his education and obtain a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture. I was unable to continue my education beyond high school. However, the opportunities that were given me at Niagara High School enabled me to be employed in the career of my choice. I was able to take outstanding business classes during my high school career. The courses I took were accounting, typing I, typing II, shorthand, and steno clerical. I was also fortunate to have the opportunity to be part of Future Business Leaders of America, a business club at Niagara High School. In my senior year of high school, I was chosen to represent our area as a student with advanced courses in business. Northern Michigan University was researching students who would had advanced classes in high school that could be candidates for skipping courses in college. This was solely due to the quality of my high school education. I also took several years of home economics classes that contributed greatly to my knowledge of the tasks of everyday life. None of the classes I have mentioned are currently available at Niagara High School.

My greatest concern is for my children. All children deserve a great school. I am hoping for better things for my children. I am concerned that my children will not have the courses they need for college, let alone courses that could prepare them for work right out of high school. Presently, a student could not be prepared for the career I was as a graduate from Niagara High School. Great schools benefit everyone. The gifted child, the average child, the college bound child, and the child with special needs. We cannot succeed as a school or community with one mainstream, minimally structured curriculum. We need to educate all of our children. Meeting the educational needs of our students is what will make a productive community, happy homes, and a progressive work force. Strong schools build strong communities. My children and all other children deserve better opportunities than I had, not less.

Sincerely,



Sharon S. Antonissen

To the Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee;

We are the seventh grade students from Niagara Middle School. We think you should take away the revenue cap as it is hurting our school. We have already endured major losses in classes, teachers, and custodians, and that is just the beginning.

Some of the reasons we think this should be done are; the loss of teachers, and the loss of sports, including wrestling, tennis, and Freshman boy's basketball. We have lost summer and school year custodians. We have also lost gifted and talented programs, Title 1 aids, and classes for the people with reading disabilities. We have lost our privileges to go on field trips: so far in the seventh grade, we have gone on three field trips, all of which were for band. Yes, our enrollment rate is declining, but not enough to put classes together. We receive so much money for each person in the school. If we have approximately thirty kids and three leave from each class, we lose the money that we would receive from having those six kids, but still have too many people to combine into one class, therefore we still have to pay for two teachers.

These are some of the positions that have been cut that effect us now or will effect us in the future. Including community service director, Winter Games director, tennis program, spring athletic director, Freshman boy's basketball, track head and assistant coaches, full time custodian, summer custodian, summer secretary, bus driver, wrestling program, and more. These don't even include the cuts for this year.

At this rate, by the time our class gets to high school, we won't have any electives. We are asking you, please give our school the right to decide the amount of money we need to have an acceptable educational program. We are talking about our future as a school, a student body, and a community. We hope you realize that educations are at stake. This cap is only hurting our school. We hope you consider what we have to say and we thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
The Seventh Grade Class of
Niagara Middle School

April 3, 2001

Dear Sirs,

My name is Tina Bagozzi and I have two children attending the Niagara school system.

As a parent of young children I find it very disturbing that our school is forced to reduce staff positions and programs due to cut backs in state allocations.

I am also upset to learn of the amount of our family's tax dollars that are being used to send children in Milwaukee to private charter schools. This money should remain within our own district to fund the local school system. Any cuts that are made in teaching and college preparedness courses undermine my children's education and chances of going on to college.

I strongly urge you to reconsider any spending cuts in education.

Sincerely,

Tina Bagozzi

Mrs. Tina Bagozzi

April 5, 2001

To the Wisconsin State Joint Finance Committee:

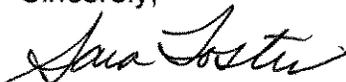
I've lived in and worked for the Niagara Public School District for the past nine years. In that time, I've watched our small but deeply dedicated district wither under the constraints imposed by the revenue caps, inequities in the school funding formula, declining enrollment, and the underfunding of special education. Despite having a strong, creative, resourceful, knowledgeable, and dedicated staff, we can no longer promise parents that we will provide to their children the best educational opportunities possible. Instead, we find providing a merely adequate education an overpowering financial struggle.

As the district's special education coordinator and school psychologist, I'm not particularly worried about our students with disabilities—federal and state laws guarantee them a free and appropriate public education, regardless of where the money comes from. Because the state of Wisconsin has deliberately chosen to insufficiently fund special education services, approximately 60% of the cost is paid with our district's local funds. By the end of this year, the projected cost for our special education programs and services will exceed \$800,000. Niagara has to swallow almost \$500,000 of that total, which is an extraordinary amount for a district with only 566 students. That's half a million dollars that will *not* be spent on the vast majority of our total student population, students that deserve educational opportunities as much as our students with disabilities do.

Tomorrow, I have to meet with a very caring parent whose child is struggling in school despite everyone's best efforts. I have to deliver the great news that her child does not have an educational disability as defined in Wisconsin statutes. However, I also have to somehow explain that we can't do much more than we're already doing to help because we do not have the financial resources needed to provide the remediation and academic support her child needs. I'd like to say that this is a unique case, but it's only one of many I find each year.

Please help us to not condemn this child and those like her to a school career filled with frustration, anxiety, and failure. Two specific ways the legislature can help are to increase its level of funding for special education and to continue to fund the SAGE program. These two measures alone will alleviate a great deal of the financial burden school districts face and in turn will go miles to help the countless students who would otherwise fall through the cracks in Wisconsin's educational system. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Sara Foster
286 Hoover Avenue
Niagara, WI 54151

The Wisconsin State Joint Finance Committee

Dear Committee Member,

My name is Debra Barkle. I have taught in the Niagara Public Schools for the past eight years in the area of art. When I began my job in 1993, my budget for art supplies was \$7,000 and directed to middle school and high school. I had only 19 students in my high school art program. Comparing this amount to my 2001-2002 year budget for high school and middle school is unbelievable. I presently have the same number of middle school students, but my high school program has increased to 84 students with more expected next year. My 2001-2002 year budget is \$3,500 and with our necessary cuts I will need to narrow the amount down to much less. If you pro-rate this amount to only high school students, each student will receive \$41.67 for the year, and as for middle school students they will get thrown 'scraps' since it is more important the higher students receive the new supplies. If any of you are aware on costs of art supplies, you will realize that this amount will not purchase much of anything.

We have a very strong art department and are actively involved with a non-profit organization known as *The Association of Student Artists*. This is a consortium of six area high schools (Iron Mountain, Michigan; Kingsford, Michigan; Norway, Michigan; North Dickinson, Michigan; Florence, Wisconsin; and Niagara, Wisconsin) with the following mission: To promote, encourage, and validate the study of art and the creative process for students. The six art teachers, including myself, formed the ASA in late 1992. The purpose of this organization is to recognize creative excellence in students from the area school art programs. Among the activities supported by the ASA is a monthly competition held in each school with a winning student selected as Artist-of-the-Month. The winners from each school, along with their teachers and a guest artist, are celebrated and recognized at luncheon at a private club. Their work is then put on display at one of the local credit unions or banks for a month. This competition motivates students to strive for excellence as well as affording them the opportunity to meet student artists from other area high schools. In this setting they share ideas, concerns and successes in the visual arts. Our organization also sponsors a portfolio evaluation night to prepare students for a college entrance, and a college night emphasizing art curricula with representatives from various art schools.

The culminating activity of the school year is the recognition banquet and exhibit where student work is judged and continuing education scholarships are awarded.

Without a substantial budget to supply my students with needs of art materials, we will not be able to compete with these area schools or involve ourselves with the ASA - an organization that the art teachers and area art students have worked eight years to improve and develop into what it is today. The Association of Student Artists was awarded the "Showcase of Public School Success" by the state of Michigan in 1998.

The high school, I believe, has taken the hardest hit. We have lost 3 full time high school teachers. We have almost deleted student's options for electives. My art program has grown due to lack of choices in electives. This results with problems within my classes due to students who really don't belong in art but are limited to choices. My classes are overloaded and I have four levels (preparations) in each class period. This creates teaching problems and student assistance, since my art I students are very 'needy' and require constant assistance. Those higher level students in art III and art IV are expected to basically 'fend for themselves' which poses new problems to those interested in an art career and who are preparing to enter an art college or university.

Any way you look at this situation you will see that Niagara Public Schools need help from the state. I thank you for reading my testimonial and hope that it will be evaluated by your committee as a "cry for help"! Please help us to solve our money problems.



Debra Barkle
Art Instructor
Niagara Public Schools
700 Jefferson
Niagara, Wisconsin 54151

To: Joint Finance Committee of Wisconsin
From: Debra Phillips, Niagara, WI
Re: Public School Spending Cap
Date: 5 April, 2001

Dear Committee Members,

For the past several years, Niagara Public School has been facing financial hardships, as are many Wisconsin Public Schools. Today, our school, parents and community have joined together to voice our concerns to our state representatives.

Our entire community is in agreement that we are already paying very high property taxes and therefore voted not to exceed the spending cap by raising property taxes. This is due in part to the low or next to none property taxes paid by the large corporation of Stora Enso Paper, formerly Consolidated Paper. This foreign Corporation has shrunk its workforce to under 400 people which has caused immense financial hardship to our community and surrounding area. This Finnish company reaps the profits but pays very little revenue to Niagara in property taxes. The citizens of Niagara are faced with making up the difference with high property taxes.

Our school is very important to us, just as our paper mill jobs are important to us. For several years now we have been losing out in both areas.

It is time the state reviews its spending cap limit laws to adjust for the needs of all Wisconsin Public Schools in the year of 2001.

Niagara only wants to move forward in education, but we will continue to move backward without the financial help from the state. I think we all would want our students learning and preparing for Wisconsin's future workforce. Today, I am afraid that our schools are lacking the necessary tools to do this. For example, my children are learning out of text books that were printed twenty years ago. Some of their class teachers are teaching without text books. I give our teachers credit for being innovative in creating their own lesson plans because of the lack of text books. Our school is also faced with laying off teachers and eliminating some classes altogether, both at the elementary and high school levels.

Our school is facing a whole list of budget cuts, \$150,000 worth. This is following \$300,000 in budget cuts 2 years ago.

We will do what we have to do, but I would hope the state would want to help us see the same excellence in education that we parents expect from our school systems. We do need your help and I hope that this realized by our state government soon.

There is something is Niagara called Niagara Pride. We will always have this pride and we hope that soon we can also have Wisconsin Pride. Thankyou for considering my concerns.

A Niagara Parent,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debra Phillips". The signature is fluid and connected, with a large initial 'D'.

Debra Phillips

SHAWANO-GRESHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

Impact of Revenue Caps, QEO, Governor's Summer School Proposal, and SAGE on the Shawano-Gresham School District

Joint Finance Committee
Thursday, April 5, 2001

Revenue Caps/Governor's Budget

- Increase in revenue equals \$612,447.00
- Increase in salary and benefits 3.8% is \$637,404.00
- Lane changes estimate \$19,605.00
- Salary and benefits equal 81% of budget
- Status Quo budget minus -\$44,562.00 for salary and benefits

Summer School

- Loss of 24 F.T.E. (Full Time Equivalent) or 8 students for 2001-2002 – from 40% to 25%
- School District in declining enrollment by six students – would have been +2 if 40% counted

SAGE

- Class sizes in grade 3 increase from 20 to 26 students
- Loss of 3.5 classroom teachers projected to lower class sizes

Milwaukee Choice/Charter Schools

- Shawano-Gresham School District sent over \$133,000.00 to Milwaukee for these programs

Revenue Limit Dollars

- Base revenue per member is \$6,559.91
- Shawano-Gresham School District is a low spending school district
- \$220.00 per pupil increase equals 3.358%
- Salary and benefits (81% of budget) equals approximately 4% increase
- Electricity, gas, fuel oil, paper, fixed costs also increasing (3.5% cost of living)
- Governor's Budget Proposal cuts an additional \$19,525.00 from the Shawano-Gresham School District spending limits over the \$225.00 per pupil increase that was projected by D.P.I.

Conclusion

We cannot keep up with the status quo, without cutting our budget, even with stable enrollments.

- The current funding is flawed and needs to be corrected.
- School districts need the option for a levy limit exemption.

While supporting parental choice and charter schools in Milwaukee may be the right thing to do, funding should not be taken from other State school districts. If these programs are important, funding should come from Milwaukee or a separate funding source.

**Preliminary 2001-02
Increase in Spending Limits
Governor's Budget**

Governor's 2001-02 Revenue Limit	\$19,052,362.00	
Actual 2000-01 Revenue Limit	\$18,439,915.00	
Increase in Revenue Limit	\$612,447.00	
Increase in Salary & Benefits 3.8%		
\$16,773,788 x .038		
Lane Changes	\$637,404.00	\$24,957.00
Instructional Budget Increase (3% per student)	\$19,605.00	\$44,562.00
Transportation 3%	\$34,485.00	\$79,047.00
Escalator Clause Transportation	\$22,706.00	\$101,753.00
Other Expenses 3%	\$30,000.00	\$131,753.00
	\$58,000.00	\$189,753.00
		Accum. Amt. Over Revenue Limit

Notes:

Revenue Limit Increase for 2000-01 was \$793,717
 Revenue Limit Increase for 2001-02 projected \$612,447

This means that we have \$181,270 less new dollars this year.

We need to cut an additional \$19,525 from the November Estimates.

DISTRICT	School Dist.	ENTER SHADED CELLS ONLY
DRUM - DRAM - DRAM	Other cells calculate after base levy entry.	
Line 1: 2000-2001 Base Revenue	=	18,439,914
Line 1 Amnt May Not Exceed Line 9 of Final 00-01 Revenue Limit Worksheet.		
00-01 General Aid Certification (00-01 line 12)	+	13,319,898
00-01 Computer Aid Received, Src 691	+	24,573
00-01 Fnd 10, Src 211 Levy Certified	+	5,071,824
00-01 Fnd 38 Levy Cert (00-01 14B levy 38)	+	
00-01 Fnd 41 Levy Cert (00-01 14C levy 41)	+	
00-01 Fnd 80 Levy Cert (00-01 14D levy 80)	+	23,619
00-01 Aid Penalty for Over Levy (00-01 bottom)	-	
00-01 Levy for 00-01 Non-Recurring Exemptions (ln 10). Enter amnt used below.		
Referendum to Exceed Limit, Non-Recurring	-	
Declining Enrollment for 2000-2001	-	
Other 2000-2001 Non-Recurring Exemption	-	

September & Summer FTE Membership Averages

Count Ch 220 Inter-district Resident Transfer Pupils 100% in 98,99 and 75% in 2000.

Line 2: Base Avg: (98+2ss)+(99+2ss)+(2000+4ss) / 3 = **2,811**

	1998	1999	2000
Summer fte:	154	185	163
% (20,20,40)	31	37	65
SEPT FTE	2,763	2,771	2,767
TOT FTE	2,794	2,808	2,832

Beginning with 2000 FTE, summer sch counts 40% and Ch 220 Inter Residents are counted at .75 per FTE

	1999	2000	2001
Summer fte:	185	163	163
SEPT FTE	37	65	65
TOT FTE	2,771	2,767	2,734
	2,808	2,775	2,775

Beginning with 2001 FTE, summer sch counts 25% and Ch 220 Inter Residents are counted at .75 per FTE

Line 10B: Declining Enrollment Exemption = **33,901**

Average FTE Loss (Line 2 - Line 6, if > 0) X 0.75 =

X (Line 5, Maximum 2001-2002 Revenue per Memb) =

Non-Recurring Exemption Amount:

Line 17: State Aid for Exempt Computers = #VALUE!

Line 17 = A X (Line 16 / C) (to 8 decimals)

Enter Est 2001 Property Values - Oct 2001 Cert Entry Incomplete or Incorrect

	Required
A. 2001 Exempt Computer Property Valuation	
B. 2001 TIF-Out Tax Apportionment Equalized Valuation	
C. 2001 TIF-Out Value plus Exempt Computers (A + B)	

Computer aid replaces a portion of proposed Fund 10 Levy

Src 691 = Computer Value X (Proposed Levy / (TIF-Out Val + Computer Value))

1. 2000-2001 Base Revenue (Funds 10, 38, 41, 80)	(from left)	18,439,914
2. Base Sept Membership Avg (98+2ss, 99+2ss, 00+4ss)	(from left)	2,811
3. 2000-2001 Base Revenue Per Member (Ln 1 / Ln 2)	(with cents)	6,559.91
4. 2001-2002 Per Member Increase (A + B - C)	(not < 225.00)	220.29
A. Allowed Per Pupil Increase - Actual Based on CPI		
C. (Low Rev Dist in CCDEB, Enter DPI Adjustment)	0.00	
5. 2001-02 Maximum Revenue / Memb (Ln 3 + Ln 4)	(from left)	6,780.20
6. Current Membership Avg (99+2ss, 00+4ss, 01+4ss)	(rounded)	2,805
7. 2001-2002 Rev Limit, No Exemptions (Ln 5 x Ln 6)	(rounded)	19,018,461
8. Total Recurring Exemptions (A + B + C + D + E + F)	(rounded)	0
Unused 2000-2001 Recurring Levy Authority		
A. Prior Year Carryover (75% of Amnt Entered Above)	0	
B. Transfer of Service (if negative, include sign)		
C. Transfer of Territory (if negative, include sign)		
D. Federal Impact Aid Loss (1999-00 to 2000-01)		
E. Recurring Referenda to Exceed (if 01-02 is first year)		
9. 2001-2002 Limit with Recurring Exemptions (Ln 7 + Ln 8)		19,018,461
10. Total 2001-2002 Non-Recurring Exemptions (A + B + C)		33,901
A. Non-Recurring Referenda, to Exceed 2001-02 Limit		
B. Declining Enrollment Exempt for 01-02 (from left)	33,901	
C. Other Non-Recurring Exemption		
11. 2001-02 Revenue Limit With Exemptions (Ln 9 + Ln 10)		19,052,362
12. Oct 15, 2001 Certification of 2001-02 General Aid (Use DPI's 2001-02 Percentage Method Worksheet to estimate)		
13. Allowable Limited Revenue: 10, 38, 41, 80 Levies + Src 691 (Line 11 - Line 12) (Src 691 is DOR Computer Aid)		19,052,362
14. Total Limited Revenue To Be Used (A+B+C+D) (Not > line 13)		0
Entries Required Below: Amnts Needed by Purpose and Fund:		
A. Gen Operations: Fnd 10 including Src 211 + Src 691	(Proposed Fund 10)	
B. Non-Referendum Debt (inside limit) Fnd 38 Src 210	(to Budget Rpt)	
C. Capital Exp, Annual Meeting Approved: Fnd 41 Src 210	(to Budget Rpt)	
D. Community Services Fnd 80 Src 210	(to Budget Rpt)	
15. Total Revenue from Other Levies (A + B + C):		0
A. Referendum Apprvd Debt (Non Fund 38 Debt -Src 210)	Entry Required (to Budget Rpt)	
B. Prior Year Levy Chargeback (Src 212)	(to Budget Rpt)	
C. Other Levy Revenue - Milwaukee & Kenosha Only	(to Budget Rpt)	
16. Total Levy + Src 691, "Proposed Levy" (Ln 14 + Ln 15)		0
2001 Tax Apportionment Values must be entered on left to calculate Computer Aid.		
17. Est Src 691 (Comp Aid) Based on Ln 16 & Values Entered	#VALUE!	(to Budget Rpt)
18. Fnd 10 Src 211 (Ln 14A - Ln 17), 2001-02 Budget	#VALUE!	(to Budget Rpt)
Line 18 (not 14A) is the Fund 10 Levy certified by the Board.	Enter Values on Left	
19. Total All Fund Tax Levy (18 + 14B + 14C + 14D + 15)	#VALUE!	
Line 19 = levy to be apportioned = DOR PC-401 Levy Rate =		
20. Fund 30 Src 210 (38 + Non-38) (Ln 14B + Ln 15A)	0	(to Budget Rpt)

April 4, 2001

Dear Committee Member:

I have lived in Niagara for 30 years raising four children in the Niagara School System. I feel as a parent that they got a quality education with all the college courses that were offered by the school, and were more than ready to go off to college. Now the school has cut out a lot of these courses and it is hurting the up coming college students. Please do everything that you can to reinstate these programs with the funds that are so badly needed by this school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Jane Bray".

Mary Jane Bray
Niagara Elementary Librarian

Special Education Testimony for Joint Finance Committee
April 5, 2001
Peshtigo, WI

Testimony submitted by:

Charles J. Hastert, CESA 8 Director of Special Education
Representing School Administrators Alliance, and Wisconsin Council of Administrators of
Special Services

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about special education provisions in the Governor's biennial budget. I am Chuck Hastert, CESA 8 Director of Special Education representing School Administrators Alliance and the Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services, and myself. I have been a Director of Special Education for 28 years, and very familiar with special education programs and services in this part of the state.

First, there are policy proposals that would substantially change the comprehensive revisions to special education law that was passed by you, the legislature in 1998. I testified on behalf of my organizations in Madison for support of passage. We have not changed our position. The 1998 revisions were the result of two long years of very intense debate of which my organizations and I were actively involved. It was very grass roots. Therefore, the entire proposal in this category should be rejected. Our members have not asked for changes, neither has any parent or other organizations.

The second category includes the proposed changes to the state special education categorical funding program. Special education aid should be improved more than \$25 million. The reimbursement level will drop from 35.4 percent this year to 33.2 percent at the end of the biennium. With increased special education costs, districts especially in this area of the state are having a difficult financial time making ends meet. They need sufficient categorical aid funding. Although we support a high cost aid program we oppose the Governor's proposal.

High cost children should be defined as three times the state average (close to \$30,000) and 90 percent of those costs should be reimbursed. The Governor's budget defines high cost as \$50,000 per child and would reimburse only 50 percent of those costs. The budget would reimburse these costs out of the current handicapped aid appropriation. These reimbursements should be in addition to handicapped aids, as we do not desire a simple redistribution of money.

The Governor's budget requires that \$10 million in the first year of the biennium, five percent of the categorical aid in the second year of the biennium, and 10 percent thereafter should be reimbursed on a census based formula (85 percent based on general student population, 15 percent on poverty). This

disassociates the funding from the services and will have a negative effect on small school districts, who are likely to see their reimbursements as a percentage go down as will districts that have a larger than average number of special education students than their general population would indicate.

In CESA 8, many school districts have 17% more of their student's population in special education, (state average, 12%). Most of the districts are small, so there could be negative reimbursement for them. We believe no change should be made in this program without a more careful analysis of both fiscal and educational implications of the proposed change. I have served on several SAA and DPI special education funding committees. We did lots of research on funding options; none of these were supportive of a census-based formula.

For the third category of budget proposal, I support the State Superintendent's position regarding federal discretionary aid to local school districts. I encourage you to reject the Governor's proposal that directs the State Superintendent to distribute the maximum possible amount of federal discretionary aid to local school districts. My rationale is based on the following testimony.

In next paragraphs, I'd like to quote Paul Halveson, DPI special assistant to state superintendent from his testimony to Senate Education Committee. I am more familiar with data in this area of the state, so I will not include comments on Milwaukee. "Although the proposal, on its surface may be appealing, it would not serve students with disabilities and their parents, local school districts, or the taxpayers and citizens of the state. More specifically the proposal is:

- built on hypotheses that aren't supported by the facts,
- educationally unwise,
- cost ineffective,
- inconsistent with the intent of federal special education law.

Let me briefly elaborate: We need to understand the facts around discretionary funding. Most of our federal set-aside or discretionary funding is provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. For the 2000 - 01 school year, we received \$16.2 million in what is called IDEA set-aside funding. There is a widespread, but mistaken belief that if the Governor's budget is enacted all of the \$16.2 million would be distributed to school districts based upon enrollment. That simple in not true. For example, based upon our discussions with DOA and our reading of federal law, we believe that there is consensus that the following activities must continue to be funded with federal set-aside funds:

- Nearly \$2 million in what the federal government calls "silver grants" must flow to school districts and CESA's for federally specified purposes. That money is technically included as set-aside money even though the federal government directs where the money must go.

- \$3.7 million will continue to go to the two state schools if what DOA calls a drafting error is corrected.
- \$1.5 million will continue to be expended for monitoring and compliant investigation activities that are mandated by federal law.
- We will continue to spend \$500,000 for a federally mandated special education mediation system.
- We will continue to spend \$130,000 for a reading research project that was legislatively required.

These federally mandated programs take half of the federal special education set-aside money.

There are, however, additional federal mandates that must be mentioned.

The state is required to operate what federal special education law calls a “comprehensive system of personnel development.” We currently spend about 40% of our discretionary money in this area. It represents about one half of one percent of what we spend in Wisconsin each year on special education. This is the research and development money for special education. It is the money that is used to find ways to make special education both more effective and more efficient. To eliminate those programs would be both educationally unwise and penny wise/pound foolish.

The State Superintendent has, since the beginning of his first term expressed the belief that we are identifying children as disabled when, in fact, their learning problems could more appropriately be met within regular education programs. To address this concern the State Superintendent has allocated more than \$1 million per year for four years to a statewide project designed to improve the teaching of reading in the primary grades. This is an investment that will result in improved reading performance and lower special education referrals, with a commensurate reduction in the growth of special education cost.

The Governor apparently believes that only school districts should be eligible to receive discretionary funding. We believe that it simply doesn't make sense not to use the Cooperative Educational Service Agencies to implement some of the statewide special education initiatives. For example, we allocate nearly \$600,000 per year to an “Assistive technology” project. Parents, teachers, and administrators have all spoken about how effective and efficient this statewide project is in responding to federal special education mandates. Under the Governor's budget, however, we would be required to abandon this project and instead flow the money to local districts with the hope and unrealistic expectation that they could do separately what we are now doing collectively. The result would be inconsistent access to needed services, particularly in smaller districts.”

At the same time, districts have received 124% increase in IDEA funding. It will increase another 20%. Also, I feel that the new eligibility rules will help decrease special education populations, especially

in this part of the state. Our Wisconsin definitions are more specific than federal, which are too broad and consequentially more students could be eligible for special education. We don't want that to happen.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. I have attached DPI information on projects, and am willing to answer any questions you might have.

Impact of Governor's Proposed Budget on Children with Disabilities
IDEA Discretionary Grants
March 2001

Reading Excellence And Demonstration of Success (READS)

- Issue: National research suggests 80% of children currently identified as learning disabled have specific reading disabilities. Research suggests the majority of these children should be able to learn to read proficiently if they are given appropriate and explicit reading instruction.
- What READS is: Research project designed to demonstrate that when children receive comprehensive instruction in reading, including phonics and phonemic awareness, their performance improves and inappropriate referrals for special education decrease.
- How much it costs: Funding recommended for 2001-02 (second year of projected four years) is \$1,150,000.
- Impact on children: The children involved in this study will experience success in reading and other academics. They will not be labeled as children with disabilities and will remain in regular education.

Systems Change—Early and Ongoing Collaboration and Assistance (EOCA)

- Issue: Children more and more are coming to school with diverse backgrounds and needs. Identification rates for children with disabilities continue to grow. Public schools increasingly are challenged to improve support systems for children when they first begin to demonstrate academic or behavioral problems in school.
- What EOCA is: Develop a collaborative problem-solving process within schools to meet the needs of students at risk of failure and referral for special education.
- What it costs: Funding recommended for 2001-02 is \$200,000.
- Impact on children: Children's needs will be addressed as soon as their performance becomes an issue for their success in school. With appropriate and early intervention, these children may not be labeled as children with disabilities.

Assistive Technology Project

- Issue: The needs of many children for assistive technology devices and services may not be met fully because school district staff are not aware of how assistive technology could benefit children, are not trained to assess children's needs for assistive technology or not trained in how to instruct children in how to use the devices.
- What Assistive Technology Project is: Assist school districts in their efforts to develop and implement efficient and cost effective assistive technology services. What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$600,000. The services of this initiative have saved school districts in excess of \$3.5 million over the past six years (private rentals, vendor donations, bulk purchases).
- Impact on Children: Children with disabilities who are provided the assistive technology devices and services they require are able to participate with their non-disabled peers in the classroom, meet with success in school and make the kinds of post secondary school transition necessary if they are to be successful.

- Personal story: Eight-year-old Jacob lives with disabilities preventing him from walking and talking. With the help of a wheelchair and switch devices, he attends school every day. Jacob helped demonstrated at the Assistive Technology Show and Tell the switches he uses. He pressed a switch that had a picture of himself on it and a recorded message. Another switch played his favorite music. Everyone could see how Jacob could communicate and participate with others in class.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Training

- Issue: DPI teacher certification does not include TBI licensure. This is a low-incidence area, approximately .0003 of total public/nonpublic enrollment.
- What TBI training is: Continue training teachers, update training materials, maintain the CESA TBI trainers' network and develop linkages with state teacher training institutions.
- What it costs: Funding recommended for 2001-02 is \$75,000.
- Impact on children: These children have very unique needs that because they usually happen as the result of an accident or injury, are unanticipated. These children benefit from the support of school staff specifically trained to deal with the issues of brain injury and its impact on school success.

Autism Training

- Issue: DPI teacher certification does not include Autism licensure. This is a low-incidence area, approximately .0017 of total public/nonpublic enrollment.
- What Autism Training is: Continue to sponsor autism training, using a curriculum that includes two introductory modules, as well as modules on assessment, discrete trials training, early childhood and social skills.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$100,000.
- Impact on Children: These children have unique and usually severe needs. As this training improves the capacity of school staff to serve these children appropriately, they succeed better in school and eventually the community.

Paraprofessional Training

- Issue: Roles of paraeducators have expanded and their impact on student learning has increased.
- What Paraprofessional Training is: Promote and support the preparation of paraprofessionals so they have the skills and knowledge to increase student learning and performance.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$50,000.
- Impact on Children: As trained paraeducators support the learning of children with disabilities, their performance will improve.
- Personal story: Mary goes from raised hand to raised hand correcting misspelled words and capitilization. After whirling around the 2nd grade classroom, Mary is off to the 1st grade classroom to help write simple stories about dogs. By the end of the day, a reading specialist and Mary will work with at least 60 students who need special assistance with reading. The reading specialist says she couldn't do her job without Mary--I would be able to help just half of the kids I do.

IEP Initiatives

- Issue: Developing a good and functional IEP is a challenge. The IEP is a process as well as a document. It serves as a compliance document, a plan for the educators working with the child, and a communication tool for the parent.
- What IEP Initiatives is: Develop a guide that an individual educator can use to assist them in understanding and facilitating the development of a quality IEP.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$150,000.
- Impact on Children: Quality IEPs that contain goals and objectives designed to meet an individual child's unique needs will help the child to succeed in school.

Behavioral Assessment

- Issue: Programming successfully for children with behavioral difficulties depends in part on understanding the purposes of behavior.
- What Behavioral Assessment Project is: Assist school staff in utilization of positive interventions to address behavioral issue, in part through the development of resources, an assessment kit, and web site.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$100,000.
- Impact on Children: Children will function more appropriately, leading to better learning and citizenship.

Transition Project

- Issue: Transition from school to the adult world often is difficult for students with disabilities. IDEA requires transition activities to ensure that students stay in school and engage in meaningful educational experiences so they will be prepared for post-secondary education, employment and independent living.
- What Transition Project is: Coordinated at the state level and implemented at the CESA/district level; provide for delivery of transition support services, including staff development.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$354,000.
- Impact on students: Students will experience success in the adult world as contributing citizens.
- Personal story: Several years ago I worked with Jenny, a high school student in our transition program. Our grant allowed us to work directly with students who would have difficulty transitioning to the world of work. This young lady was non-verbal, poorly motivated, with low self-esteem. During the 10th and 11th grades, we exposed her to a variety of jobs. It was apparent she loved to clean, was extremely organized and very thorough. Her teacher and I arranged for a training program at a local hotel. One day a week we took her to the site and worked with her cleaning rooms. This was the first time Jenny could demonstrate her ability to achieve. She began to smile, and tried to communicate more. Last semester of her senior year she was employed part-time. By graduation she had a full-time job with benefits. In doing follow-up we learned that she was in charge of the morning breakfast served to guests. Obviously her communication skills had greatly improved. I understand she was able to get her drivers license. We never could have provided this type of attention or program without this discretionary grant and I'm sure Jenny would have exited high school and remained at home.

Post High School Student Follow-up

- Issue: Special education law requires collection, analysis, and dissemination of general information about persons with disabilities who no longer attend high school, including whether they are employed, enrolled in postsecondary education and living independently. Education stakeholders and policymakers need to assess the successes of the educational experience of students with disabilities.
- What Post High School Student Follow-up study is: Outcomes survey of students with disabilities who graduated during the 1999-2000 school year; a longitudinal study is planned three and six years out, adding a new cohort of graduates. Local educational agencies will utilize the data to identify strengths and weaknesses in their instructional programs.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$50,000.
- Impact on children: Utilize survey results to improve performance outcomes of students with disabilities. Establish performance standards in the area of postsecondary outcomes, and improve the transition planning process to enable individuals with disabilities to make successful transitions from secondary school.

Mediation Project:

- Issue: Sometimes, the relationship between parents of a child with a disability and school staff is marked by disputes about what is right for the child.
- What Mediation Project is: Free both to schools and parents, mediation is facilitated negotiation carried out by a neutral person, the mediator, designed to help parents and school staff resolve their disputes.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$485,000.
- Impact on students: When parents and school staff can resolve their dispute in this non-adversarial manner, respect becomes mutual and communication is improved, contributing to a more positive working relationship in the future.

Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative (WSPEI)

- Issue: Building positive partnerships among parents, schools and communities on behalf of children with disabilities can be challenging.
- What WSPEI is: All about partnerships, its goal is to develop a statewide network of parents and school staff to create or maintain resources to help foster positive working relationships, supporting shared decision-making and children's learning.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$775,000.
- Impact on Children: When parents and school staff start off with a positive working relationship, the benefits to children are significant.

State of Wisconsin-Special Education Cost/Aid

	2001-02*	2000-01**	1999-00	1998-99	1997-98	% INCREASE 4 YR>
IDEA-FLOW-THROUGH	\$97,901,119	\$75,296,051	\$63,635,298	\$53,393,045	\$43,637,177	124.4%
IDEA-DISCRETIONARY	\$16,094,478	\$14,275,383	\$13,757,276	\$14,827,891	\$11,636,581	38.3%
IDEA ADMINISTRATION	\$3,188,482	\$3,091,082	\$3,013,896	\$2,969,791	\$2,909,145	9.6%
IDEA-PRESCHOOL ENTITLEMENT	\$7,316,518	\$7,316,518	\$7,016,370	\$7,016,370	\$6,757,860	8.3%
IDEA-PRESCHOOL DISCRETIONARY	\$1,886,777	\$1,886,777	\$1,839,663	\$1,839,663	\$1,602,096	4.7%
IDEA-PRESCHOOL ADMIN	\$471,694	\$471,694	\$459,916	\$459,916	\$450,524	4.7%
FEDERAL SHARE						
% OF TOTAL	\$126,859,068 11.3%	\$102,337,505 9.9%	\$89,722,419 9.2%	\$80,506,676 8.7%	\$67,193,383 7.8%	88.8%
STATE SPECED CATEG						
% OF TOTAL	\$325,681,400 29.1%	\$315,681,400 30.4%	\$286,048,700 29.6%	\$275,548,700 29.9%	\$275,548,700 31.8%	18.2%
STATE EQUAL (SPEC ED COST) ***						
% OF TOTAL	\$444,744,731 39.7%	\$413,358,781 39.8%	\$395,916,937 40.7%	\$376,249,652 40.9%	\$349,338,279 40.3%	27.3%
LOCAL SHARE ***						
% OF TOTAL	\$222,372,332 19.9%	\$206,679,388 19.9%	\$197,956,671 20.4%	\$188,124,798 20.4%	\$174,669,114 20.2%	27.3%
TOTAL						
% OF TOTAL	\$1,119,657,531 100.0%	\$1,038,057,074 100.0%	\$971,644,727 100.0%	\$920,429,826 100.0%	\$866,749,476 100.0%	29.2%

* Estimates

** State and local share of special education cost covered by Equalization aid should be considered estimates (6.1% increase) as of 3/29/00.

*** Assumes state pickup of 2/3 cost

Testimony on Governor McCallum's Budget
By Darryl Wheeler

I come before you in a two-fold position. First, as a full time enrolled student in one of the states higher education institutions, and second as a convicted felon with knowledge about the ineffective correction system that seems to be eating up taxpayer dollars at an alarming rate. I am currently enrolled at UW-Marquette and will be transferring to UWGB next fall. I have been the Student Senate President for this year and am going to continue with student government at UWGB.

I will address the issue of how ineffectual this budget is to the states higher education program. The Governor made a statement on February 20, 2001 stating, "In my inaugural address delivered 19 days ago, I spoke about what I called the making of Wisconsin. About the need to invest more money in education....about the goal of keeping Wisconsin's economy strong and growing."

-The budget is not concerned about the issue of position flexibility and its impact on students. We need this issue to be in the hands of the colleges and universities. We do not need legislators telling us we can hire a librarian when we need an English professor.

-The budget does not seem to address the issue of financial aid. In past years whenever there is an increase in tuition there is also an increase in the WHEG. This grant reached more than 22,000 students and no increase in this funding will eliminate many new incoming students. Where is the increase this year or next?

-The budget does not seem to be focused on making our system more diverse. Plan 2008 needs the 2 million dollars that were asked for so that a larger adult population can be taught and ease the load of late evening classes up on our tenure professors. This will allow our colleges and universities to offer new classes to the full time students thus allowing them access to a four-year degree in 4 years instead of 5 to 6 years.

Without these issues being addressed in a professional manner and not in an insulting manner, as they are now addressed by this budget, the statement the Governor made in February is a mute point. We need the funds asked for to keep our states economy strong and growing. I do not see this as "teenagers asking for more allowance", as the Governor has termed it last in his statement on resistance to his proposed budget.

Next I would like to mention the prison system of this great state. With recidivism at over 80% and having 70% of incarcerated people in prison for drug related offenses, the system does not seem to be working. Sociologists have proven over time that an educated society is less likely to commit crime for survival. We need to take some of the 350+ million dollars that will be spent to house some 19,000 inmates, with over 4000 of them being sent out of the state, and spend it to educate. It would seem the taxpayers, myself included, would be getting more bang for the buck by helping the 140,000 college students educate themselves and try to educate those most likely to commit crimes. With average tuition across the state being at \$1500 a semester, one million dollars would pay full tuition for over 330 students for one year. That is some bang for the buck! Thank you

Catherine Divio
N2439 Pearney Lane
Norway, MI 49870

Thank you for the chance to address you this morning. I'm a kindergarten teacher in Niagara. I have been teaching in Niagara most of the time since 1967.

I sincerely hope we will not be forced to cut back on nursing service in Niagara. I think of our school nurse as an angel. When I'm teaching and a child wets her pants or throws up or puts his head down on his desk and goes to sleep because he's sick, I can count on the nurse to come to my rescue. If Mrs. Broullire's hours are cut, I will have to stop teaching to take care of these emergencies.

We do not have enough money in Niagara to buy all the supplies and equipment we need in our classrooms. Last year the school allowed me to spend \$857.78 on items such as educational posters, puzzles, games, magazines, books, etc. I spent \$861.45 of my own personal money to buy things the school could not afford. I need a new desk chair, but that would take too much of my budget to even think about. We can't afford new textbooks that we need.

Next year, thanks to the SAGE grant, we will be able to have three kindergarten classrooms operating in the morning during critical instruction time in language arts and math. In the afternoon we will have only two classes. This means I will have 15 children in the morning and 22 or 23 in the afternoon. Our classrooms are not big enough for this many children. As it is, I have very little room for block play or creative movement. Next year I will have to move another table in my room to seat everyone in the afternoon. The children in kindergarten these days are much more needy than the children I began teaching in 1967. We are getting children affected by hearing impairments, Downe's syndrome and autism. Many children could benefit from counseling. Since our counseling staff has been cut back, I need a smaller class to meet the children's emotional needs.

Thank you again for inviting me to speak to you today on behalf of Wisconsin's five and six year olds.

April 5, 2001

The Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee

Dear Committee Member:

The state budget for 2001-2003 as authored by Governor Scott McCallum is seriously flawed in its approach to education and will continue to undermine the most productive public educational system in the country.

The budget provides no flexibility with revenue caps. This increases state control and continues to strangle school districts' ability to meet student needs in an increasingly complex and competitive world.

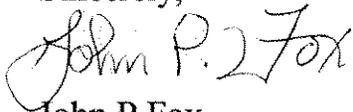
The budget attempts to circumvent the constitution by taking powers from the State Superintendent of Public Schools to monitor school performance and standardized testing. This is a continuation of the Thompson-McCallum effort to destroy Wisconsin's unique and highly successful system of public education under a State Superintendent of Public Schools. The last attempt to do this was thwarted by the Supreme Court and public opinion. The McCallum budget attempts to reach the same goal in incremental stages.

The McCallum budget continues to trivialize the contributions of public school teachers. It calls for increased private contracting proposals and lowering teacher license requirements to a point where someone with less than a high school diploma could get a license to teach. Our state cannot have the best schools or even good schools without good teachers.

I served as a member of the Board of Education for the School District of Florence County for over six years and I know the desperate financial situation Florence and many other schools are in is not self-inflicted. Sufficient controls and accountability have always been in place for public schools. No, this crisis was designed and nurtured through years of policy hostile to public schools and public educators. The 2001-2003 budget is a continued manipulation of public schools using that misguided policy with the potential only to seriously reduce the finest educational system in the country and give the appearance of it having collapsed on its own. Larger classes, fewer course offerings, reduced special support services, lowering the training of teachers, and a steady erosion of local control are not in the best interest of the children.

The Wisconsin system of education with an elected State Superintendent and no state board of education has produced students with the highest American College Test (ACT) scores in the nation according to the Wisconsin Tax Alliance organization. Our military recruiters have stated Wisconsin also has the highest Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test scores in the nation. I urge your committee to reject this budget and provide leadership and direction to keep Wisconsin's public schools the best in the country. Our children deserve it. Our economy needs it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John P. Fox". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

John P Fox

Rt. 1 Box 14

Niagara, WI 54151

April 5, 2001

To: Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Susan Theisen and I am a first grade teacher at Niagara Public Schools. I feel unequivocally that the public school systems across the state are in a dire state of decline. This decline is not because of incompetent teachers or school violence, but, because of poor governmental legislation.

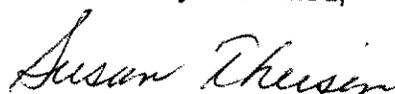
I am writing this as an urgent request to please consider removing the revenue caps that the state has placed on our education system. We at Niagara Public Schools, as well as many of our neighboring Wisconsin schools are feeling, and have been feeling, the pinch of these caps for the last six years.

As educators, we take pride in our profession and the successes of our children. We instill in our children the importance of striving to do their best, sometimes under less than favorable conditions. **We believe that our children are our future.** Unless our legislature starts believing this, they will continue their trend of excessive spending on prison systems in place of our education system.

Please consider removing these revenue caps, they are ruining our rural school systems. The Niagara Public School System of past years was one that was envied by all local areas. It was top notch, offered an excellent variety of classes, and provided a well rounded education for all students. This is not true of our system today. We no longer can afford to offer Gifted and Talented programs, college prep math programs, business education, and Home Ec., because all have suffered the consequence of former governor Thompson's educational budget cuts. In addition to those cuts, several extracurricular activities have been discontinued, requests for professional development have been denied and, most importantly, counseling for our elementary children has been cut by 50%. Again, I ask you to please reconsider these revenue caps. These are public schools and our job, as teachers in our public schools, is to prepare our children for their future in this beautiful state of Wisconsin.

Please remove these revenue caps before our schools are mere shells of what they once were, or what they are meant to be. If these revenue caps aren't removed, our schools and, eventually our state, will suffer the consequences. In closing, I would like to cite a quote from State Superintendent, John T. Benson's article "Education is the birthright of all children". In this report he stated, "at the foundation of it all, there must be a funding mechanism that ensures society devotes the needed resources, effort, and priority to our schools so that all children in Wisconsin benefit from their birthright - a world class public educational system." Please don't take that birthright away from our students.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Theisen

Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee

April 1, 2001

Kay Johnson
1233 Garfield St.
Niagara, WI

Dear Committee Member,

I am writing this letter to inform you of the proposed problems our school district will face in the near future with the current state aid package being given to our district. In order to operate, the Niagara School District is requiring an annual raise in their budget of 3.8% to properly educate our children and maintain our school buildings. The state aid proposal only allows for a 0.8% increase in state funding. This difference in proposed amounts can mean a cut in money of hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. This amount is virtually impossible to be picked up by taxpayers in our district. On an annual basis, these figures will drive the Niagara School District into bankruptcy in just a few years.

An alternative to this budget decrease is being designed that will begin eliminating many of the schools vital academic and supportive programs. Advanced courses in science and technology, along with supportive programs like athletics along with the school nurse, are just a few of the ways the district is looking into trimming the targeted budget. Is this what our state wants?

Why is our district only receiving a 0.8% increase in funding? We have been informed that part of the reason why is because our district debt is much less than other schools. Reason being, we have paid off the debt of building a new elementary school 20 years ago and now are being penalized for not having such a debt. Just because our district focused on paying a debt, we are now suffering from lack of funds from state aid? This just does not make sense to me.

I have been the proud parent of two graduates of Niagara Public Schools within the last 10 years and equally as proud of both of my children for furthering their education, as both have attained college degrees. I feel it is vital that the school district continues to offer all the programs it can to prepare our young children for a successful future. My two children felt it was very important that they received all the courses they did in order to prepare them for college. Please don't make our school start cutting these important courses out of the students' schedule.

I ask that you give this situation a lot of attention. We ultimately have the futures of hundreds of young people at stake. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Kay M. Johnson

Niagara Public Schools

Kay M. Johnson L.P.N., Special Ed Aide

Zona Carlton

W 8532 Jefferson

Niagara, WI 54151

April 4, 2001

I am a parent that lives in the Niagara School District. I am giving this testimony because I am very concern about my child's education. Niagara has been making many cutbacks because of Government imposed Revenue Controls. If this should continue, and it looks like it is, by the time my child reaches High School there won't by anything left, except for the bare essentials.

Two years ago, this happened to my sister's son. He graduated from High School in the top ten percent of his class. When he found out he was accepted to Michigan Tech University he was so happy. He went into computer technology, but after his first semester, he wanted to quit. He said that he couldn't keep up with the other students because they came into college with much more knowledge than he had A year later he transferred to a smaller private school and his dream was crushed.

I am here today to fight for my child's education. I don't want her dream to be crushed. I want her to get a good education just like every parent in America does.

If funding doesn't change soon at Niagara School's soon I will move to Michigan (one mile away) to get my daughter a suitable education. I am not the only one that feels this way. If this should happen, what is the future for Niagara School? What is the future for the town of Niagara.

Now I would like to know what do you want for the future of small school districts? Because if government keeps on making these cutbacks, they will all be bankrupt!

Thank you for your time.



Zona Carlton

Michael Carlton

W 8532 Jefferson
Niagara, WI 54151

Dear Governor McCallum:

My wife and I are currently living in the Niagara School District. My understanding, is that, do to budget cuts caused by government Revenue Controls, a lot of the college prep classes will not be offered by the time my child reaches High School.

I wish you would reconsider your position in this manner. I like living in Niagara, but if she can't get the classes she needs to go to college, I have no choice but to move back across the river to Iron Mountain or Kingsford, MI.

Thank you for hearing my opinion.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Carlton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "C".

Michael J. Carlton

Members of the Joint Finance Committee:

Today I come before this hearing with a special plea on behalf of public education.

My name is Ted Kempkes. I am a resident of Phillips. Until recently I was a business person in Price County. I have been involved in community affairs in Phillips and Price County nearly all my adult life and know from firsthand knowledge what impact providing high quality education can have on a community, its residents, and their employment. I have also been involved in technical education serving as board member and board chair of Northcentral Technical College. As a taxpayer I know good value when I see it. Public education is the best investment our taxes can make.

Wisconsin's system of public education has been a source of pride for the state's residents and the envy of nearly every other state in the country. Wisconsin's educational system is, in fact, the reason my father moved his family to this state in the mid-50s. Now that is changing.

In the past decade, something bad has happened to Wisconsin's public educational system. It has become the only area of government where citizens can directly oppose spending. In the past decade the voters of this state have denied repeated requests from local school districts for needed funding because it exceeded of the artificially low and punitive levels imposed by a policy known as revenue caps. Voters say no, not because they oppose public education and all it provides, but because this is the only government spending to which they can easily say no.

Our state's public schools provide quality education for students while the stewards of this wonderful resource, the administration and legislature,

are promoting policies that punish providers and belittle the efforts of those with whom we entrust our children.

The idea and implementation of revenue caps may have polished the image of some politicians but it has punished public education.

Faced with this gloomy future for public education, it's time that education in Wisconsin be returned to a position of high importance. We must all realize that public education, of all public needs, will never be cheap if it is to be good. Nor can it be comprehensive if it is not great.

Because public education costs are greater than private schools that "cherry-pick" students imprudent comparisons have been made. Public education costs are for all students not just the motivated, financially secure, physically able, or those with most committed parents.

Revenue Caps have frozen school spending to the level that existed 9 years ago, creating a growing gap between educational funding and the cost of running the schools. The ruthless truth is that most school district costs rise much faster than the allowable increase imposed by revenue caps. Every year it gets worse.

This year the proposed state budget extends policies that allow for only about one-third of the cost of the state's share of the reimbursement for mandated special education programming. The state now reimburses districts just 17 cents on the dollar spent to deliver ESL programming.

On one hand Wisconsin has imposed punitive revenue caps and on the other not honored the commitment to

fund two-thirds the cost of K-12 public education.

Long-term we need to look seriously at what we want education to provide for our children and their future. Short-term we can return some of the luster to the crown jewel of Wisconsin's public institutions in a couple of ways.

Allow school boards to raise revenue caps by one percent of average state spending per pupil with state aid if school boards want it. Increase the state aid for ESL programs to 60 percent of the cost incurred by school districts for all students with limited English. Finally, the state should shoulder at least 50 percent of the actual cost of providing education for students with special needs.

Projections for this cost is in the neighborhood of 260 million dollars. Just a portion of money already available in the levy tax credit of 469 million dollars. Money that was allocated to represent the state's original two-thirds commitment to the funding for K-12 public education. No new state spending is needed.

Today it has been my privilege to come before you to air issues and ideas. That is a strength of our system. Another strength is that there is opportunity for vital corrections in the way Wisconsin funds public education. I urge you to provide the necessary financial relief to the school districts by upholding the state's previous commitment to the funding of public education.

Thank you for your time.

Testimony for the Joint Finance Committee

April 5, 2001

Peshtigo, Wisconsin

Members of the Joint Finance Committee,

Thank you for coming to Peshtigo in an effort to listen to the people of Wisconsin's concerns. My School Board and I sincerely appreciate this opportunity to express our concerns without driving the entire length of the state. I am speaking on behalf of the Laona Board of Education. The Laona School District is located at the intersection of Highway 32 and 8 in Forest County in northeastern Wisconsin. Geographically, Laona has a very large district stretching from the Michigan boarder to south of Laona, Wisconsin. The property of our district is made up of primarily federal and state land. A large proportion of the taxable property in the Laona School District is minimally taxed under federal/state forest crop provisions. The district serves approximately 300 students with a property valuation of approximately sixty seven million dollars.

Over the past 12 years, the district has struggled hard to survive and to maintain a quality educational program for our students. Over the years we have met or exceeded every state and federal mandate that has been put upon us. We were co-oping athletic programs when nobody else was. We were co-oping and sharing teachers and programs with other districts when no one else was. In short, Laona School District has done everything that the legislature has asked the School District to do under the imposed revenue caps. Last year we came to the legislature with our hat in our hand and we did receive some assistance for which we are certainly grateful. The Large Area District legislation is certainly a step in the right direction in providing badly needed assistance for districts like Laona to survive.

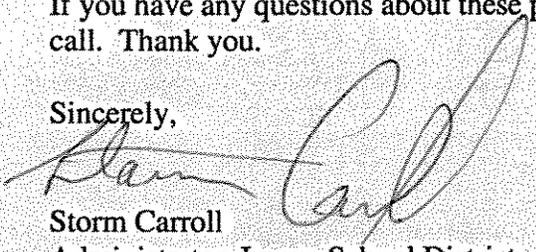
Financial problems our district faces are similar to most other school districts in this day and age. State mandates on Special Education, teacher licensure, facilities, health and safety, accompanied with declining enrollment has put the Laona District in a situation where this year, we will be facing a \$49,000 shortfall and a 3 mil tax increase to meet the state imposed revenue cap. Yes, the Laona School District is, in fact, in tertiary aids. Ninety percent of our district is non-taxable and my School District is paying tertiary aids because of the inflated values of the existing property. If the Laona District is going to survive, we need your help. The following list reflects some actions that the legislature could take any, part or all, which would greatly help our district over the next few years.

1. Fully fund the Large Area District legislation at \$350.00 per student.
2. Assist the school districts and townships in northern Wisconsin to maximize the 25% Payment through federal PILT legislation
3. Increase our Special Education Reimbursement from the current 32% to 50% annually.
4. Stop the amount of equalization aid flowing from northern districts to the Milwaukee choice program

5. Stop applying tertiary aid deductions in districts where the average family income is less than 80% of the state average. In Laona, the family income is less than 70% of the state average.

If you have any questions about these proposed solutions, please feel free to give me a call. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Storm Carroll
Administrator, Laona School District