



Columbus School District

200 W. School Street | Columbus, Wisconsin 53925 | (920) 623-5950

Columbus High School
1164 Farnham Street

Columbus Middle
400 S. Dickason Boulevard

Columbus Elementary/Discovery Charter
200 Fuller Street

RE: Columbus Board of Education Legislative Committee Communication

As members of the Columbus School Board, we write this letter to inform you of the critical issues facing school districts throughout Wisconsin. Due to years of inadequate state funding for our schools, districts across the state are facing budgetary barriers to providing students with the strong public education our state used to be known for. Through outreach and advocacy, we join other defenders of public education in a call for full funding for Wisconsin's public schools. We hope that we may compel you to contact your own state Senator or Assembly Representative on behalf of your local district.

We all bring varied backgrounds to the Board. We see many different blessings, struggles, and circumstances in our students and families. Some kids arrive each morning with everything they could ever need tucked into their backpacks. Others arrive hungry, ready for the breakfast they will receive. Some kids endure long bus rides from outside the city, some get dropped off by their parents, and some have only one or no parents. Public schools welcome every child, regardless of their situation. We understand how invaluable that service is to students and families across the state, and we celebrate the teachers and support staff who help them with whatever issues they might face while also giving them as strong of an academic foundation as possible.

Unfortunately, the cost to provide this type of support grows each year. Utilities and transportation costs continue to rise, and gaps in funding take away from other areas of a district's budget. For example, Wisconsin school districts receive just 30% reimbursement from the state budget for the Special Education services they provide, one of the lowest rates in the nation. A district's general fund has to make up the difference because again: public schools welcome every child.

Wisconsin has a tradition of excellent public education that our elected officials are failing to uphold. Since 2003, the percentage of the state budget allocated to K-12 education has dropped from 43% to around 32%. Going cheap doesn't serve communities or students well. Across Wisconsin, districts have had to slash spending on things like co-curriculars, facility maintenance, classroom supplies, and valuable teaching staff. Often, districts go to operational referendums simply to get the basic funding they need to operate and keep their doors open to students. Voters recently approved an Operating Referendum in our district, this April, so we understand the position so many of us are in. Districts need spendable funds to provide the education that will help all students succeed after high school, which strengthens their community.

Most education funding comes from the state level, and Wisconsin's current K-12 funding levels create an uncertain future for our school districts, and by extension, our students. Tell your state officials: "I support an increase to the Special Education reimbursement rate AND increased spendable funding that keeps up with the actual costs to operate our schools this biennial budget season." Visit

<https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/My-Elected-Officials> if you're unsure who to contact.

We appreciate your help!

Columbus Board of Education Legislative Committee