

1/30/2007

Governor Jim Doyle
P.O.Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Doyle:

The Parent Teachers Organization (PTO) for the Cochrane – Fountain City (C-FC) school district, is concerned with the way that Wisconsin funds public education. The revenue caps that were put in place in 1993 have placed a large financial burden on our schools. One of the main issues we have with the current funding system is that it is based on spending rather than need and it punishes districts that were fiscally responsible in 1992.

In April of 2006 a failed referendum caused C-FC to cut \$750,000 from our budget. That is a devastating blow for a small school district. We have delayed infrastructure expenditures, reduced support staff and allowed our fund balance to decline and it is difficult to find additional areas to cut back on without directly impacting our students. And of course, we have no resources to pursue new initiatives that would benefit our children's education. Instead of being able to pursue creative strategies to excel for our students, we are forced to do all we can to maintain the status-quo.

These cuts not only hurt our children, but polarized the community. Cutting the school budget is not something new for our school, the C-FC school district has been making budget cuts for a number of years. We have attached an informational pamphlet that the C-FC PTO published showing the budget cuts that have been made since the year 2000.

From research the C-FC PTO has conducted, we have found that many if not most Wisconsin public school districts are having similar financial struggles. Without State school funding reform C-FC along with many other school districts will be forced to continue to cut budgets thereby eroding the Wisconsin public education system.

The Cochrane – Fountain City (C-FC) Parent Teachers Organization (PTO) has recently agreed to join forces with the WAES to endorse the adequacy model they are proposing. It is our understanding that the Wisconsin PTA, in partnership with WAES, would like to see the following increases in the biennial budget:

Transportation--\$97.7 million

Bilingual Programs-- \$54.6 million

Special Education-- \$898.7 million

SAGE PLUS-- \$380.3 million (This would fund the same as the DPI budget with an additional \$300 per year per lunch-subsidized student.)

Sparsity-- \$26.5 million

C-FC, and public schools around the state, need financial help now. We are hurt by lack of state funding for special education and transportation. Without increased SAGE funding C-FC may forego the SAGE program and increase class sizes at those lower grades. As it is with many rural schools, we need protection from declining revenues resulting from declining enrollment. And while we need emergency help now, the state must re-visit how it funds schools. We need comprehensive reform of the school funding system that starts with an accounting of how much it costs to educate our students first, and then finds the money to make sure local schools can do the job. We must stop using local property values to determine the amount of funding a school

district receives. A total reform of the school funding formula is needed soon to help schools fully recover from the fiscal problems that are causing this educational crisis.

As a partner in WAES, the C-FC PTO is committed to fighting for increased categorical aid to address the critical short-term needs in all school districts. At the same time, we urge you to work with us, with other education stakeholders, and with the Legislature to begin comprehensive reform of the school-funding system in 2007.

Sincerely,

C-FC PTO Officers on behalf of the PTO membership

Melissa Baker
Ed Callahan
Linda Clark
Kelli Krzyszton
Robert White