

Good Afternoon. My name is Cynthia DiCamelli and I live in Brooklyn, Wisconsin. I am the parent of two children, ages 15 and 17, who attend public high school there. I am also a member of the Oregon Board of Education and president of the Wisconsin PTA.

First I want to thank all of you for undertaking the challenge to study education in Wisconsin. This is not an easy task, nor will the solutions be easy to find. However, before you can find answers, you need to know the problems. I'd like to talk to you today about some of the things our nearly 40,000 PTA members across the state tell us are concerns in their schools and school districts.

There is no doubt that Wisconsin has one of the finest public education systems in the country. So did California not too long ago. When I look at our current funding system, and the ever decreasing share of state revenues devoted to educating our children, I wonder how long it will be before we, like California, face an educational crisis. Our schools are strapped for funds. This isn't news. In the past year, to prepare for the potential budget cuts layered on top of already tight budgets, schools across the state began slashing programs and essentials. In my own district, we eliminated teaching, custodial and support positions. We delayed, again, purchasing current text books. We cut our capital maintenance budget by a third. We're lucky. Our community supports our schools and has been generous in passing referenda and we have been one of the few districts in the state that continues to have increasing enrollment. In other circumstances, we would be like many other districts in the state. Instead of eliminating some positions, we would have eliminated whole programs. Our maintenance budget would be nonexistent.

Right now, schools are making up the budget shortfall by consuming their fund balance, putting their future in jeopardy. Right now, PTAs are being asked to fundraise to purchase library books, playground equipment, and computer software. How far are we from fundraising to pay teacher's salaries or the utility bills? How will we demand that our children meet state and federal achievement standards when they don't have the resources they need?

On behalf of the members of Wisconsin PTA, I urge you to carefully consider the impact of diminishing funding on the quality of education in our state. Once you've considered the issue of funding and its impact on educational excellence please consider the funding plan that includes the adequacy model for school funding. Only in the adequacy model are funding levels directly connected to educational needs and goals.

The children of Wisconsin are our future. We owe it to them and to ourselves to provide the skills, education and resources they will need to be successful.

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