



Dr. Jubal C. Yennie
Superintendent of Schools
1948 Grand Avenue, Laramie, WY 82070
(307) 721-4400 / Fax (307) 721-4408
www.acsd1.org

Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration
200 W. 24th Street
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

Oct. 22, 2020

Dear Co-chairmen Sommers and Kinskey,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the impacts of potential budget cuts outlined in your Sept. 30 letter.

In short, budget cuts of the magnitude described—16 percent for the 20-21 biennium and 27 percent for the 21-22 biennium—would render Albany County School District #1 incapable of delivering quality, equitable education to the children in our community as the Wyoming Constitution requires.

Like all Wyoming school districts, the vast majority of ACSD#1's budget, roughly 85 percent, applies to personnel. The remaining 15 percent includes non-discretionary expenditures such as insurance, utilities, legal and audit fees, etc. Please note that, among the state's larger school districts, ACSD#1 adheres the closest to the Legislature's prescribed funding model. Also note that the district has already absorbed funding cuts over the past several years.

The upcoming potential cuts would result in the reduction or elimination of support staff across the district—such as nurses, librarians, paraprofessionals, counselors, and custodians—and would impact our teaching cohort, as well. Our class sizes would dramatically increase, decreasing the quality of education our teachers could deliver. We would need to eliminate various electives at the secondary level, as well as offerings at elementary schools like music, physical education, and art. Staffing shortages would pose significant obstacles to providing adequate instructional support for at-risk and struggling students.

These budget cuts would force the district to abandon its current strategic plan and devise a new, diminished blueprint for educating our community. They would eliminate the district's ability to deliver the "basket of goods" as it currently exists, and they would prevent the district from offering a path for students to earn the Hathaway Success Scholarship.

The potential budget cuts would restrict ACSD#1's ability to prepare our students for quality careers, diminishing our community's and our state's potential to diversify and

develop their economies. Fewer jobs and poorer education would reduce Albany County's capacity to attract and retain a trained and talented workforce. This would hurt the University of Wyoming's efforts to adequately staff the state's single four-year university. The job losses from ACSD#1 as a result of these potential cuts would immediately damage our local economy, as workers in our school district significantly support local businesses. This would slow the county's already painful recovery from impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The State of Wyoming provides Hathaway Merit and Need Scholarships for Wyoming students attending the University of Wyoming and Wyoming community colleges. Every Wyoming student who meets the merit requirements can earn a Hathaway Merit Scholarship. Contact your school counselor for more information.



Dr. Jubal C. Yennie
Superintendent of Schools
1948 Grand Avenue, Laramie, WY 82070
(307) 721-4400 / Fax (307) 721-4408
www.acsd1.org

The solution to Wyoming's education funding troubles was outlined in a legislative white paper several years ago. It contained three parts: cut funding, modernize the ways in which the state allocates revenues, and raise new revenues. The state has executed the first two of these steps, and all that remains is the third.

Wyoming's Constitution explicitly instructs the Legislature to "create and maintain a thorough and efficient system of public schools, adequate to the proper instruction of all youth of the state," and to fund such a system "by taxation or otherwise."

The range of potential options here is broad, given how narrowly the state today relies on mining industries to supply its revenue. Wyoming is one of only a handful of states that does not have a personal state income tax, and we are one of only two states that has no mechanism to tax corporate profits. According to the nonprofit Tax Foundation, Wyoming has the third lowest residential property tax rate in the nation and the sixth lowest sales tax rate. A recent study by Wyoming's Legislative Service Office shows that these rates are also far lower than those in neighboring states.

All Wyomingites are unaccustomed to paying state taxes like the residents of other states do. The same is true for the people of Albany County. But we are also a community that deeply values education. For instance, in 2013, our residents voted to levy a tax on themselves to help pay for enhancements to our new high school. Our community is willing to pay taxes on a building in which education takes place, and we are willing to help pay for the education itself.

Again, the trustees of Albany County School District #1 appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback about these potential budget cuts and their impacts. Please let me know if I can provide further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice Marshall".

Janice Marshall, Chairman

On behalf of the Trustees of Albany County School District #1



The State of Wyoming provides Hathaway Merit and Need Scholarships for Wyoming students attending the University of Wyoming and Wyoming community colleges. Every Wyoming student who meets the merit requirements can earn a Hathaway Merit Scholarship. Contact your school counselor for more information.