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December 9, 2020

Dear Chairman Sommers, Chairman Kinskey, and Members of the Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration,

Campbell County School District #1 appreciates the opportunity to respond to your letter dated September 30, 2020 requesting feedback on the fiscal difficulties facing the State of Wyoming and the potential impact of cuts to our educational system. While the biennial budget deficit for FY2021-22 has improved from \$515.1 million to \$309.7 million in October, we realize there continues to be a projected shortfall to meet the future fiscal responsibilities of the State.

The foundation guarantee for our district is approximately \$136 million. A 10% reduction would equal a \$13.6 million cut to our guarantee in FY22 which would result in approximately 140 positions within our district. A reduction of that magnitude would be devastating to our educational programs and we would be unable to deliver the required *Basket of Goods* to our students. This would impact all areas of our organization, including the classroom.

The legislature has defined what is in the *Basket of Goods* and the associated costs required to deliver *the Basket of Goods* to Wyoming students. According to the Wyoming Constitution, funding these programs is a fundamental right in Wyoming and funding the programs included in the *Basket* is the responsibility of the legislature.

The Board recognizes the revenue challenges facing the Legislature. We trust the Legislature to determine the best remedy for Wyoming to meet the constitutional requirements of educational funding...keeping-in-mind that the lack of financial resources is not an acceptable reason for failure to provide the best educational system.

At the end of FY21, Campbell County School District #1 will have sent over \$960 million to the State in recapture payments primarily due to the success of the mineral industry. Our district remains committed to providing the best educational system possible for our students in order to prepare them for the future!

To do so, we need your commitment to properly fund the Wyoming educational system. The system is required to be cost-based and the recalibration process must be used to determine those costs accurately.

Teaching Effectively – Learning Successfully

Campbell County School District is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.



To date, several scenarios have been prepared by the Legislative Service Office working with both the current legislative model and the drafted 2020 recalibration recommendations from Picus Odden and Associates. The options, utilizing recommendations from the draft evidence-based report, indicate an overall increase in K-12 funding.

- We believe teacher salaries, which constitute a large portion of model resources, should be adjusted to reflect actual costs. *Campbell II* indicated that the model is not constitutional if the estimate of teacher costs in the model does not reflect the actual cost of the teachers necessary to deliver the *Basket*.
- All model positions must be fully funded within the model in order for the model to remain cost-based. This includes health insurance and other benefits that contribute to the cost of employees.

Anything other than fully funding the benefits of model positions would ensure the model is no longer cost-based and would harm districts across the state. Our stance is consistent with the benefit recommendation of the State's consultants that benefits for all model positions be funded.

An essential pillar of the Wyoming school finance system is block grant funding. The funding model is not intended to be a prescription for success but to provide constitutionally required resources to school districts. This allows local, elected officials to meet the unique needs of their community. Several areas that are not funded or are underfunded within the model but are deemed essential by our Board include competitive staff salaries, elementary counselors, nurses, computer-science, school resource officers, supports for at-risk students, food service, and activities.

Without any further legislative action, our district is already facing cuts in the upcoming fiscal year. Average daily membership is down over 160 students from the previous year and the external cost adjustment from FY21 will decrease by 50% in FY22.

Additionally, our district made significant cuts over the last several years to adjust to legislative funding cuts. Those cuts included the elimination of teaching, administrative, and educational support positions. Examples include the elimination of 50% of library media specialist positions in our elementary schools, 50% of our gifted and talented teaching positions, the elimination of our summer enrichment program, and administrative reductions in finance, maintenance, and public relations departments.

Our economy will rebound and a strong K-12 system will be vital to the future economic success of our great State. We appreciate your service to Wyoming students and wish you the best in the upcoming session.

Sincerely,

Anne Ochs, Chairman