



CODY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Park County School District No. 6
919 Cody Ave., Cody, WY 82414

October 20, 2020

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

Thank you for this opportunity to detail the consequences of funding reductions. Budget cuts for Wyoming school districts affect our students, families, and communities; the Park County School District No. 6 Board of Trustees appreciate this opportunity to tell our story.

Governor Gordon's suggestion that Wyoming districts plan for a 10% reduction in educational funding resulted in an earnest conversation about the financial impact on the Park6 budget. In their input request, Co-Chairs Kinskey and Sommers indicate that we should consider even more significant funding reductions. A 10% reduction in funding for Park6 equals a \$3.3M deficit, which will impact each school and program at every educational level. The Park6 2020-21 budget is \$33,024,575.62, and 86% of the budget is salary and benefits. The remainder of the budget represents fixed and variable costs. Our goal is to protect the integrity of instruction for our students, but these deep cuts will make that nearly impossible.

The loss of certified positions equal to budgetary reduction are:

% Reduction	Budgetary Reduction	Certified Positions	Base Salary including Benefits
10%	\$ 3,276,459	56	\$56,625
16%	\$ 5,242,334	89	\$56,625
27%	\$ 8,846,439	151	\$56,625

Reducing teaching positions will increase class size, reduce or eliminate educational programs, student activities, athletic opportunities, and potentially require restructuring our elementary buildings. While Park6 would seek to preserve teaching positions, the budget, after salaries, is \$4.6 million. The remaining budget must pay for utilities, educational materials, and operational supplies, etc. The district cannot achieve a 10% cut to the budget without negatively impacting instruction and eliminating personnel.

Proposed state funding reductions are one of many challenges Park6 faces including:

Regional Cost Adjustment - Cody's demographic shifts as people discover this wonderful place to retire. The regional cost adjustment fails to reflect Cody's cost of living and increasing housing costs. We seek to attract and retain the best teachers, but the combination of budget reductions, salary stagnation, and property inflation hinder our efforts.

Decreasing Enrollment - Park6's enrollment has been receding for a decade. In the last 18 months, the closure of Cody Labs resulted in 135 jobs lost and the CertainTeed plant relocation eliminated 50 jobs. These ADM losses are compounded by the 2019 pandemic, with our enrollment falling under 2000. The Park6 estimated funding loss for 2021-22 is \$336,664.

Unfunded Obligations - Legislative action requiring additional programs without funding affects our bottom line. The district is mandated to implement computer science standards next year with a highly qualified teacher. This expenditure is an unfunded mandate. Assessments are crucial educational tools, especially in evaluating our students' learning gaps exacerbated by the pandemic. Park6 purchases assessment tools and supports intervention for dyslexia and formative assessments like MAP without state funding. Districts cannot successfully do more with less, much less maintain our current programs. The legislature continues to add to the Basket of Goods and intends to provide less funding to meet our obligations.

School Security - Student and school safety are vital and expensive. While Park6 received grants for a portion of the hardening of our school buildings and the reconfiguration of school entries, the majority of the expense was paid by Park6. Our comprehensive security plans, cybersecurity, Rule CKA, and school resource officers are unfunded in the model.

At-Risk Populations - Funding reductions may eliminate successful programs that benefit disadvantaged students. The pandemic has increased the need for mental health services in our schools to meet the needs of vulnerable students. The reduction or elimination of counseling personnel, talented and gifted programs, after school tutoring programs, and Kindergarten Readiness Camp widen the achievement gap and compromise our most vulnerable student populations.

Capital Construction - The Park6 \$3.6 M replacement of the 1952 bus barn, funded by Pre-1997 Cash Reserves and the sale of two district properties, is in the best interest of our district and will ensure the safety of our employees. [SFD 2016 FCI Score .4341] This project demonstrates district initiative and self-reliance, but the capital construction expenditure decreases Park6's ability to soften the impact of revenue reductions.

External Cost Adjustment, Fixed Costs, and Inflation - The External Cost Adjustment was not fully funded, reducing Park6 revenue by \$350,000. The rising costs of products, services, utilities, and security increase the cost of operations. The district does not control the annual increases of fixed costs, including:

SRRP (Property, Liability, & General Insurance)	34% Increase
School Resource Officer	42% Increase
Health Insurance	13% Increase
Software	4% Increase
Utilities	2% Increase

Wyoming's Vision

In 2005, Wyoming's commitment to education was manifested in the Hathaway Scholarship Program. The promise of Hathaway was multifaceted – an investment in Wyoming students with

a focus on a rigorous curriculum, high expectations, and the incentive of a college scholarship. The proposed funding reductions will undermine this shared vision. The elimination of teaching positions will increase class size and reduce student opportunity. As you consider changing Wyoming's course from excellent to adequate, please reflect on the loss of opportunity for individuals, families, communities, and Wyoming.

It is the Wyoming Way to define a problem and implement a solution like Hathaway. Wyoming students and educational excellence remain the answer to our problems.

Wyoming's Workforce - Economic diversification depends on student success. Student success depends on quality instruction. Excellent instructors depend on cost-based funding. Our highly qualified instructional staff educates all students for military service, college, and employment. Economic diversity in our state demands workplace-ready employees with the attitude, skills, and knowledge needed by industry.

If budget cuts are the only answer to the revenue deficit, teachers will lose their jobs. Job loss negatively impacts our community and the economy of the Big Horn Basin. Wyoming teachers will be forced to move and raise their families elsewhere. Ironically, these teachers are the same students who earned the Hathaway Scholarship. The goal to grow Wyoming students for Wyoming was successful. Wyoming students excelled, returned home with a positive attitude and exceptional skills prepared to educate the next generation of Wyoming students. Our investment, and our children, will be exported to surrounding states rather than capitalizing on our return.

As elected officials, we face the consequences of this economic crisis. The Park County School District No. 6 Board of Trustees shares this burden as we serve two thousand students and four hundred employees. Our priority is educational excellence for all students. We are committed to legislative expectations and accountability and recognize that our decisions impact students, families, communities, and Wyoming.

Thank you for requesting and considering our input. The Park County School District No. 6 Board of Trustees requests a statutory increase of the allowable cash reserve limit. School districts must conserve funds in current budgets to adapt to the loss of funds. We trust that the legislature will "provide for the recalibration of the education resource block grant model to determine if modifications are necessary to ensure it remains cost-based in light of changing conditions and modifications to law" including funding for all legislative action. [W.S.S 21-13-309(t)] As a Board, we expect any decrease in categorical funding would coincide with reductions in the required Basket of Goods.

Respectfully, on behalf of the Park County School District No. 6 Board of Trustees,



Brandi Nelson, Chair