May 8, 2020

Senator Tammy Baldwin  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Ron Johnson  
328 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Congressman Mark Pocan  
1421 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Bryan Steil  
1408 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner  
2449 Rayburn H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Glenn Grothman  
1427 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Ron Kind  
1502 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

Congresswoman Gwen Moore  
2252 Rayburn H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Mike Gallagher  
1230 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Members of the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation:

We write you today to request that you support and approve new funding for local school systems in the next COVID-19 supplemental appropriations bill. This federal allocation would include $175 billion in Educational Stabilization Funds, distributed to the local level through the Title I formula. In addition, we ask Congress to provide $13 billion for IDEA, $12 billion in additional Title I program funding, $2 billion for E-Rate, and emergency infrastructure funds designated for public schools.

According to early estimates, Wisconsin is forecasting a $2 billion loss in revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Legislative leaders have indicated there will likely be massive funding freezes in the second year of the fiscal biennium. These shortfalls will be devastating to Wisconsin’s public schools. Estimates from the Learning Policy Institute project that Wisconsin will lose 11.7% of its public school teaching positions due to revenue losses from COVID-19. Based on figures from the WI Department of Public Instruction, this 11.7% reduction translates to 7,096 teaching positions that will be lost. This will undoubtedly increase classroom sizes, reduce programming and water down the overall quality of students’ educational experiences.

After over a decade, when adjusted for inflation, Wisconsin was finally on the verge of getting back to pre-2008 recession level funding. This public health crisis has derailed that trajectory and an entire generation of students is now under threat. If the United States does not act now to preserve academic and educational standards, this generation will suffer inferior educational
opportunities, which lead to fewer career opportunities and a chain reaction of negative societal and economic repercussions.

Aside from the economic impact, students have already suffered learning deficits as schools have largely been shut down since mid-March. Virtual learning instituted since then cannot replace in-person instruction. The lack of direct student-teacher interaction will undoubtedly cause learning loss heading into next school year. With drastically fewer teachers and resources, this learning loss will exacerbate the problems of funding and personnel shortages. As these shortages increase, pay and benefits are also likely to suffer. This will surely lead to a reduction in post-secondary students entering the education field. These rates were already dangerously low before the COVID-19 crisis, and further decreases in teacher-prep program enrollment could be catastrophic to public education as we know it.

Local schools need significant funding and aid from Congress to combat the negative educational effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The urgency in this matter cannot be overstated. Our children’s educational and economic futures depend on decisive action. An investment now will give educators a fighting chance to ensure that students across the country will have opportunities to find academic and economic success. This proactive investment is critical to each and every student and to the long-term future of our country.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your commitment to serving the people of Wisconsin especially during these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Sondy Pope
State Representative
80th Assembly District

Tim Carpenter
State Senator
3rd Senate District

Jodi Emerson
State Representative
91st Assembly District

Jill Billings
State Representative
95th Assembly District

Debra Kolste
State Representative
44th Assembly District

Evan Goyke
State Representative
18th Assembly District

Fred Risser
State Senator
26th Senate District

Steve Doyle
State Representative
94th Assembly District

Gary Hebl
State Representative
46th Assembly District
Amanda Stuck
State Representative
57th Assembly District

Christine Sinicki
State Representative
20th Assembly District

Mark Spreitzer
State Representative
45th Assembly District

Jimmy Anderson
State Representative
47th Assembly District

Marisabel Cabrera
State Representative
9th Assembly District

Chris Taylor
State Representative
76th Assembly District

Jeff Smith
State Senator
31st Senate District

LaKeshia Myers
State Representative
12th Assembly District

LaTonya Johnson
State Senator
6th Senate District

Melissa Sargent
State Representative
48th Assembly District

Jason Fields
State Representative
11th Assembly District

Robert Wirch
State Senator
22nd Senate District

Don Vruwink
State Representative
43rd Assembly District

Danny Riemer
State Representative
7th Assembly District

Greta Neubauer
State Representative
66th Assembly District

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90th Assembly District

Tip McGuire
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Lisa Subeck
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77th Assembly District

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79th Assembly District
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Katrina Shankland  
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71st Assembly District

Lena Taylor  
State Senator  
4th Senate District

Tod Ohnstad  
State Representative  
65th Assembly District