

From: Bob Claus [<mailto:bclaus@craigschools.com>]
Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2014 11:25 AM
To: Sen. Gary Stevens
Cc: Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Sen. Bert Stedman; jwalsh@craigschools.com; Sarah Altland; Dolores Owen; sbrookshire@craigschools.com; Mike Kampnich
Subject: Testimony SB139

Please include this in the public record and distribute to committee members.

I strongly support a realistic and substantial increase to the Base Student Allocation(BSA). As a school board member, I have struggled with the issue of flat funding over the last four years. Our district in particular has seen flat funding from the state, a decline in federal income, and a decline in enrollment. This triple whammy has caused us to fail to maintain strong programs in the face of increasing costs for everything from fuel and groceries to travel and insurance. One thing that the legislature has control over is the BSA, and I urge you to increase the formula funding.

Our district has maintained high expectations of our students and staff, and has achieved good results by any measure. We receive a generous continuing contribution from our local government. We have taken steps to cut our energy costs by emphasizing efficiency and conservation measures in all of our school facilities. We have taken a hard look at our staffing levels and made difficult decisions to increase class sizes at the elementary level and have had to utilize non-highly qualified teachers to teach some subjects at our high school. We made cuts to our vocational education program in response to last year's funding levels.

We are forced to make difficult choices that fly in the face of research-based best educational practices. No one on the School Board wants to increase class size, cut counseling positions, ignore the needs of our vocational education students, limit activities travel, or limit academic opportunities for those willing to take advantage of them. These are the options we have if flat funding continues.

I urge you to pass this bill quickly from your committee with a recommendation to the Finance Committee to increase the BSA to a level that helps us maintain a high level of service to our students and families.

Thank you for considering my remarks.

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