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March 4, 2021

Dear Sunman-Dearborn Community School Corporation Parents:

As many of you are aware, the Indiana General Assembly is just past the mid-point of their session. For 2021, this is a “long session” when the biennium budget is passed. K-12 education is the largest category of state spending, usually just over 50%. I would like to make you aware of several bills being considered.

First, for some historical context, in 2009 the Indiana General Assembly eliminated property tax as a source of revenue for local school corporations’ General Fund (now called the Education Fund). Per Indiana Code, this is the only local fund that can be used to pay teachers. We also participate in two federal funds used to pay some of our teachers - special education, and Title I.

According to the Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission report released in 2020, Indiana ranked 22nd in per pupil spending in 2004, but by 2018 fell to 36th in the nation and 11th in the Midwest. The Commission was created during the 2019 legislative session in response to low teacher pay and a teacher shortage. The report states “Teacher compensation is critically important to the future success of the more than one million students enrolled in Indiana’s schools. The research is clear: better compensation results in better teachers who generate higher quality education, stronger student performance, and greater student outcomes beyond the classroom.” For a full copy of the report can be found here:  
<https://www.in.gov/gov/files/Teacher-Pay-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

We were pleasantly surprised when the state revenue forecast showed growth over the next two years, especially during a pandemic and higher than normal unemployment. In addition, Governor Holcomb announced his legislative priorities to increase state funding for public K-12 schools and stated, “...options shouldn’t come at the expense of the public school system, which educates 90% of Hoosier children.” He continued “Teacher Compensation Commission Report identified 37 different state and local ideas to reduce costs and increase revenues for our public schools, and we should examine them closely to put more funds into teachers’ pockets. When, not if we do this, we will be one of the best in the Midwest for teacher pay, and we’ll be better able to attract and retain teacher talent, including attracting more minority candidates.”

Unfortunately, the Indiana General Assembly has introduced three bills that run contrary to the commission report and the legislative priorities of the Governor. House Bill 1005 (HB1005), Senate Bill 412 (SB412) and Senate Bill 413 (SB413) diverts state revenue away from public

education. Together, these bills expand the voucher program which allows your tax dollars to be used for private education, and creates a radical new program called Education Savings Accounts. The total cost of these bills as introduced has been estimated to be over \$200M. Through the amendment process, the total cost has been reduced. However, it is important to note that the amendment process continues, and the bills could easily cost the initial estimate or more. Currently, HB1005 has passed and is now being considered in the Senate. Both SB412 and SB413 have passed the Senate and are being considered in the House. It is especially worth mentioning that language in SB413 is directly counter to one of the recommendations in the commission report. The commission recommends the local school board pass a local referendum increasing property tax revenue. SB413 diverts current property tax revenue to local charter schools.

You can hear more about these bills on my monthly SuperChat podcast.

<http://static.theflypod.com/episodes/sunman-dearborn-schools/>

Nearly every association that advocates for public education has spoken against these bills; Indiana School Board Association, Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents, Indiana Council of Administrators of Special Education, Indiana Parent Teacher Association, and many others. Your school board will be considering a resolution opposing these bills at the March 11th board meeting. We need your help. Please contact your representatives listed on the next page. Let them hear your voice. We are not being represented.

Thank you for your continued support of our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "A".

Andrew Jackson  
Superintendent

Sunman-Dearborn Community Schools  
Indiana General Assembly Legislator Contacts

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