

## MHASD Community Members -

The way we pay for public education in Wisconsin is changing. With state aid lagging, school districts are turning to local residents for additional resources to ensure they can provide the educational experiences their communities expect, and that our kids deserve.

During this fall's general election, the Mount Horeb Area School District seeks to bridge our funding gap through an operational referendum, which is a request to raise funds that exceed the tax revenue limit imposed by the state. If approved, the money would help address anticipated ongoing shortfalls within the district's operating budget.

This is not a step that MHASD takes lightly. In fact, this marks the first time since 1999 that our district will make such a request. Our administration and Board take pride in maximizing the impact and reach of taxpayer dollars. But the situation has reached a point where we need further investment from the community to continue to serve the needs of students, their families, teachers and staff.

How did we get here? Why are we and other fiscally responsible communities that value education asking for this assist?

The primary reason is that for six of the past eight years, the Wisconsin state legislature has provided no new state funding on the revenue limit (\$0 per-student increase). In the past twelve years, the average annual per pupil funding increase on the revenue limit has been \$3.02. Additionally, the state legislature provided no new funds on the revenue limit in its current two-year budget, which runs through the 2022-23 school year.

The impact of that shift over time will not surprise you: In 2002, Wisconsin had the 11th highest per-pupil spending in the country; by 2020, we had fallen to 25th. This represents the largest drop of any state over that time period.

Meanwhile, the costs associated with educating our students and keeping the lights on in our schools continue to increase. Gradually over time, and significantly this year, amid a surge in inflation, that affects everyone's pocketbook.

So, there is one pathway to raise additional money to meet educational needs: by placing that decision in the hands of you, the voters. Since 2014, every Dane County school district has sought an operational referendum except one: the Mount Horeb Area School District. This fall, 56 school districts across the state - including several in Dane County - will turn to their communities for financial support through operational referendums. Over the past decade, 83% of school districts from our region have passed a referendum to address budget challenges or facility needs.

Our local referendum asks for \$4.8 million, beginning in the 2023-24 school year and continuing indefinitely. This sum constitutes roughly one-sixth of our current annual budget. For homeowners in the MHASD community, the approximate annual tax impact would be \$75 for each \$100,000 of equalized property value moving forward.

Our community has repeatedly told us that having highly effective teachers and a high-quality staff is the number one priority for MHASD, because you understand these professionals' direct impact on our students. The district intends to use referendum funds to:

- Attract and retain high-quality educators and staff, our primary goal.
- Maintain current programming.
- Address technology infrastructure needs.
- Continue the district's bus replacement schedule.
- Cover escalating utility costs.

Should this referendum fail, MHASD administrators and the Board will be faced with incredibly difficult decisions about the path forward, and the adjustments we make would be seen and felt in our classrooms and throughout the District.

The general election will be held November 8, and early voting has already begun. For more information, please go to <https://www.mounthorebschools.org/district/referendum.cfm>. For information about voting please go to [www.myvote.wi.gov](http://www.myvote.wi.gov) . When you cast your ballot, please consider the return on investment our school district delivers for our kids and our community.

Respectfully -

Members of the Mount Horeb Area School District Board of Education