



**High achievement by all students,
where learning is our most important work**

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November 19, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Cassis
Senate Finance Committee Chair
905 Farnum Building
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Senator Cassis:

On behalf of the Farmington Board of Education, our staff, and our 12,000 students and their families, we wish to publicly declare our extreme disappointment in the continuing lack of responsibility to resolve the recent funding cuts to public schools by the leadership in Lansing. While we appreciate your recent attempts to arrange a meeting with the Governor and Senate Majority Leader, Mike Bishop, it is incumbent on every elected official to get together to resolve this crisis now. It is beyond comprehension that some legislators can take a break to go deer hunting in the midst of a financial crisis when our children's education hangs in the balance.

Farmington Public Schools serves the communities of Farmington and Farmington Hills with a combined population of more than 80,000 residents. Farmington Hills is the largest city in Oakland County. We are a community that truly values a quality public school system that offers outstanding academics, fine arts, and athletic programs. We celebrate and embrace diversity; over 95 different languages are spoken by the families in our District. We also graduate 95% of our students with an equal number going onto college. As a 20j District, our residents pay higher school taxes and, with that, comes the expectation that we continue to provide their children with a quality education. They have put their trust in us, and we have delivered. We expect no less from all our elected officials.

Office of the Superintendent

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Over the past five years, Farmington Schools has reduced costs and eliminated well over 100 staff positions to the tune of \$33 million in reductions. Over the same time period, we have instituted energy conservation programs that have saved \$5.2 million of this \$33 million. We now have a community-led committee that has been charged to examine building consolidation and school closings. We are also sharing services with the cities and neighboring school districts where possible. We have made tough decisions and balanced our budgets. We have looked to Lansing to do the same, but you have failed us and our children.

Status quo is not an option; nor has it ever been. We can no longer continue on this road; "Band-Aid" approaches do not work; politics as usual does not work. What will work is a sustainable solution to funding education. That is the moral and ethical responsibility of all our elected leaders. We must have a reliable funding source if we are to continue to provide a quality public education to all of Michigan's children so that they can graduate well-prepared with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a global economy; and frankly, Michigan's future depends entirely on their doing just that.

With that said, we join with our colleagues on the South Lyon Board of Education in asking for your timely response to the following:

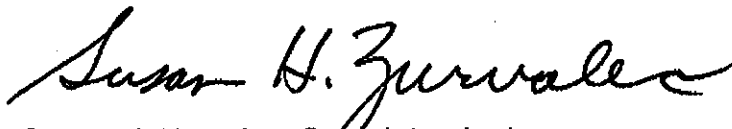
- Assuming that education is a fundamental and primary responsibility of the State and that it is your desire that we as a school district meet the performance expectations you have given us, what will you do to provide a continuing fair level of funding for the education of our children that allows us to meet our responsibilities as a school district?
- Realizing that Michigan requires a structural redesign if we are to succeed as a State and meet our obligations to our children, what actions will you take that will result in structural changes in expenditures and revenues that will allow us to fulfill our collective responsibilities?
- Acknowledging the absurdity of the budget-making process that results in school districts developing budgets five months before our revenues have been identified, what will you do to change this process so that all of us can make financial and program decisions that are coordinated and make sense?

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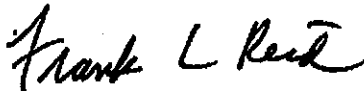
As we've said many times in the last several weeks, it is time to stop pointing fingers and sit down together to solve this crisis. Farmington students, and all students in the State of Michigan, look to Lansing to represent their best interests now and in the future. We implore you, the Governor, and the Michigan Legislature to immediately come together to resolve the funding cuts and seek a permanent remedy to school funding.

We have enclosed a copy of the resolution passed by our Board of Education at its November 17 meeting and stand ready to assist you and our elected officials at any time to resolve this crisis.

Sincerely,



Susan H. Zurvalec, Superintendent
Farmington Public Schools



Frank L. Reid, President
Farmington Board of Education

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enclosure

c w/attachment:

Governor Jennifer Granholm
Senator Gilda Jacobs
Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop
House Speaker Andrew Dillon
Representative Vicki Barnett
Farmington Board of Education
Dr. William Pearson, superintendent, South Lyon Community Schools
South Lyon Board of Education
Dr. Joan Sergent, executive director, Tri-County Alliance
Judy Allen, director of government and community services, Oakland Schools
Superintendents of 20j Districts