

Good morning, Committees –

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm here today with a very simple message. I represent three school districts and one supervisory union across my legislative district, and I share those with not only my district mate, but three other legislative district Representatives. I am also a School Board member in one of those districts. To speak in blanket statements about our region's schools may seem improbable, but in this case, I feel that I represent all of them with my sentiments. If you look at a statewide graph, we are among the lowest-spending districts in the state; my district's proposed spending in this budget cycle is \$9900 per student. We continually hold spending increases to a minimum and have not had a budget fail in a very long time. This year, due to the publicized tax projections, our budgets were uniformly defeated. We faced the very hard work of trying to cut budgets that were already near bare-bones; our informational sessions are just beginning, as we attempt to educate the public on how close to the \$1 tax rate we are, which means any cuts below that rate will start sending revenue directly to the state. Our boards looked long and carefully at spending cuts, and even though we had very little left to cut, we made a good faith effort to implement difficult cuts, including those affecting public safety in our schools. I'm here to call for higher-spending districts to follow our lead and cut their budgets. With the current statewide formula remaining in place, those high-spending districts that continue to spend because they can, will cause our property taxes to rise, even as our ability to provide services to students declines. It is imperative for all voters to understand how their spending across the state, in all districts, affects all taxpayers, and ultimately, all students.