

To: The Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

Senator Joseph Rafferty, Representative Kelly Murphy, and Members of the Committee

I am William Braun, Superintendent in AOS 90 representing M.S.A.D 30 and the Adjacent Towns of Carroll Plt., Lakeville, Reed Plt. and Macawhoc

Testimony: School funding Ed. 279/ An acct to amend the Essential Programs and services funding formula, LD 2226

School districts across the state thank the legislation for continuing to provide state support for the public-school programs across the state.

The present formula, although under constant review, has fallen significantly out of pace with the changes in our economy. Although the formula was intended to fund what was believed to be the dollars necessary to provide an essential education for our K-12 students. Since its inception, we have had many changes in the requirements for program changes which have come into existence since the formula was established including cost for significantly higher needs students, pre-K and now 3-year-old supports, and multiple changes in our needs for technology and school safety.

Schools across the state are impacted by the regional adjustment. Small and rural schools are impacted by staff ratios and then further impacted by the regional index which reduces the state funding. Within the funding for staffing, given the increases in mandated salary levels the formula no longer keeps pace with these increases, nor does it keep pace with the increases in the cost of benefits such as insurance rates, with increase costs which exceed the average cost by 2 to 3 times.

LD 8 section 1036 was put into place with the vote to approve the Oxford Casino, was to provide dedicated funds for school funding under the essential programs and services model. Under this law, the percentage of both slots and table games was to provide additional funding for educational programs state-wide through the funding model, however these dollars flow to the general fund and although they are used for the funding of education, they actually replace state dollars and in fact, supplant state funds rather than supplement state dollars to add additional support for educational programs. Positive votes for establishing a second casino in the state was sold on the idea that it would further support funding for schools and reduce local costs, while it simply replaces state funding. The latest estimate in revenue for 2026-27 is in excess of 42 million dollars which would pay the total costs of eliminating the regional adjustment to all the districts who receive less than 100% of the essential program cost for

staffing, benefits and other student support. This change would further impact the level of additional funding a town would have to raise to support their local school budget.

While reviewing the educational funding model, it would be beneficial to review the cost of transportation as fuel costs, labor costs, driver shortages, repair costs for outside repairs now at a rate of \$150 per hour impacted by unpaved roads in rural districts as well as the increased cost of replacement which is upfronted by the local district for the first year. The same is true for out of district costs for special education services in which day treatment programs now require districts to pay for 12 months rather than the traditional school year in order to allow for summer education for impacted children, however if the child does not attend the summer program the district is still required to pay the cost in order to assure the district of that placement for the next school year. The areas of target funds for disadvantaged and technology have fallen behind the actual costs of maintaining programs and resources. Additional costs for educational support for students who are disadvantaged have continued to increase due to the same issues already covered. Increased costs to maintain and to replace technology resources have also seen vast cost increase and will continue to need additional support.

In reviewing the proposed LD 2226, it is only a beginning to update the laws which established the Essential Programs and Services funding formula, however much more work will be needed in the future as we continue to deal with the number of the unfunded mandates previously discussed by this committee and the various economic factors that impact the cost of operations for all school districts.

I will close by simply stating that as economics continue to change adding costs for operations and education, the funding for education needs to be continuously reviewed and adjusted.

Thank-you