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Within our growing, diverse community, we sow the seeds of opportunities to raise prepared, resilient students.

Dear Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee:

Approximately one month ago, my district Superintendent, Mrs. Dandy Stevens, provided testimony. Today, I would like to share a similar message regarding Gervais School District's capital funding request of \$2.85 million to replace our high school's roof and repair damages attributed to the failing roof.

Gervais is in House District 22 and Rep Cramer is supporting both funding requests and we thank her for the support and guidance.

Gervais is a small, rural town that serves 900 students. The district is 100% free lunch and 84% of our student body are students of color. In Gervais, there are no full-service grocery stores, coffee shops, restaurants, doctors, pharmacies, or even a gas station. The school district is the largest employer in town and its facilities are the only gathering spaces for the community.

The district has not been able to pass a general obligation bond in 33 years. There have been six failed attempts since 1997 with the most recent one failing in Spring 2022. Portions of the elementary school were constructed in the 1930s, the high school was opened in the 1960s with no major upgrades since then and the middle school is a hallway of modulars financed by a loan costing the district \$245,000 a year.

The district has pursued multiple grants, but our attempts have been unsuccessful to this point. The original high school roof is beyond repair and cannot be patched any further. Water pours down the walls during heavy rains, ceiling tiles leak, and buckets are spread throughout the hallways. The district is an example of how skyrocketing construction costs and an inability to secure additional financial supports result in outdated and unsafe learning facilities.

On behalf of my Superintendent and our community, I'm asking for financial support to create a dry and safe learning environment for our students.

Thank you.

Best,

Dr. Creighton Helms

Director, Student Services and Federal programs

Gervais School District 1

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