

Dear State Legislators,

The Riverdale School Board is writing to express our support for increased SPED funding so districts across the state can best serve its growing number of students on IEPs. We agree that resources are finite; however, it is important to support all students with the services most needed.

The Riverdale School Board believes:

- **Our Students with Disabilities Deserve Every Opportunity to Succeed in School.**
- **But Our Current Funding Model for Special Education is Inequitable and Needs Updating.** The 11% SPED cap was put in place after Measure 5 was passed in 1991.
- **Funding Has Not Kept Up With Caseload Growths.** We have more students with disabilities who need highly specialized services and well-trained staff. We must have the funding to meet these growing needs.
- **Current Special Education Funding Is Inadequate.** Funding for the staff, services, and programs that serve our students with disabilities does not account for the real costs our school districts incur. Districts must cover these costs by redirecting general fund dollars to cover inadequate state funding.

The Riverdale School Board understands that we need to make additional investments to meet the growing needs of our students with disabilities in the State School Fund, and requests that state legislators:

- **Raise the Special Education Cap:** In Riverdale School District, 15% of our students have been identified with special education needs, but the state only provides double weighting for 11% of our students. This means we have to innovate and subsidize with thousands of dollars from our general fund to cover these shortfalls, which impacts our ability to provide services to all of our students.
- **Increase Funding for High-Cost Disability Account:** As school board members, we have a moral and legal obligation to serve all students with disabilities. In our district, many students qualify for the High-Cost Disability Account funding. However, that Account only covers about 40% of our eligible costs, forcing us to move dollars from other programs to make up the funding gap. The state must fund 100% of the costs of

meeting the needs of our most severely impacted students.

The Riverdale School Board firmly asserts that improving the formula is insufficient. Additive funding is needed to account for true costs. According to ODE data, school districts report spending more than \$700 million per biennium on special education services not funded or reimbursed by the State School Fund. We must make two critical changes, and we ask again that State legislators:

- *Raise the SPED cap and include the additive dollars to pay for these new weights in the State School Fund Appropriation (HB 2953); and*
- *Ensure that school districts receive reimbursement for 100% of the eligible expenditures they make to ensure our most impacted students with disabilities receive the support and services they deserve from the **High-Cost Disability Account** (HB 2448).*

We thank you for your consideration of this critical component of our students' education.

Sincerely,

Riverdale School Board

Superintendent Chris Russo