Mount Horeb Area School District

Dr. Steve Salerno, Superintendent

Mrs. Theresa G. Daane
Director of Student Services

Mr. Scott DeYoung
Ass't Supt of Business & Finance

Mrs. Sarah Straka
Director of Instruction

April 4, 2017

Dear Senator Erpenbach,

On behalf of the Mount Horeb Area School District Board of Education, we offer our deepest appreciation for your continued advocacy and support on a number of critical issues impacting public education. It is based on your very compelling record of supporting enriching educational experiences for our young people that we hope you will reinforce an effort gaining momentum throughout the State: the repeal of Wis. Stat. sec. 118.045 *Commencement of School Term.*

At first glance, the tourism industry appears to offer a reasonable rationale for their staunch advocacy for maintaining the status quo; however, a deeper analysis of the law's impact demonstrates its unfavorable impact on those we are privileged to serve, our children. While the law does permit individual districts the opportunity to petition the Department of Public Instruction for an earlier start date, it can only be approved for "extraordinary reasons," none of which have much to do with student learning and are rarely approved based on a local community's own interests.

In essence, we are hoping that we can count on your continued partnership in releasing control back to local governing Boards on topics such as this. The impact of this state mandate surely is not intended to cause harm; however, that is the impact of a continued unilateral start date. Relinquishing control back to those better suited to make such decisions, in lieu of special interests, would (among other things):

- allow the Board of Education to make instructional decisions that best meet the equitable needs of ALL of our students (through flexibility in scheduling hours and minutes to minimize summer learning loss; accelerating learning for students participating in Advanced Placement courses; additional instructional lead time prior to administration of the ACT; permitting participation in university coursework through Youth Options; and encouraging internships, co-ops, and apprenticeships with local businesses);
- permit districts to better align its school calendar with the co-curricular schedule for students that begin in early August; and
- better meet the needs of its students to have breaks throughout the school year to align with best practices for student learning, to decrease the rate of illnesses/absences and to increase time spent with family over the holidays.

If the adverse impact to children brought by §118.045's "one-size-fits-all" approach is not enough to convince those ardently opposed to such change, at the very least its inequities should be acknowledged and balanced. As you may know, the State Superintendent of Schools is recommending in his 2017-19 Biennium Budget to allow the Milwaukee Public School District to be provided an exception to the state law. In addition, charter, private, and voucher school districts have the flexibility to start prior to September 1, and they receive public funding from the State of Wisconsin. Therefore, this opportunity should be granted for all school districts in the state.

Of course, it we can be of any service in helping you better understand the impact this arbitrary law has on students, please do not hesitate to contact us. In the meantime, thank you for working in partnership with our Board of Education and the over 125+ other school districts who have already sought, through resolutions and

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similar letters, to return local control so that we may even better serve the educational needs of all students and families. We appreciate your kind attention and consideration of this letter.

With warmest regard,

Diana Rothamer
President

Dani Michels
Vice President

Jeff Hanna
Clerk

Michelle Dunn
Treasurer

Leah Lipska
Member

Damon Piscitelli
Member

Kimberly Sailor
Member

Dr. Steve Salerno
Superintendent