



April 23, 2010

The Honorable Herb Kohl
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kohl,

We write on behalf of the School Finance Network, a coalition of key Wisconsin education organizations that includes superintendents, school boards, educators, parents, and community activists. The purpose of this letter is to appeal for a second round of K-12 education federal stabilization funding.

For 15 years, many of our school districts have been forced to lay off staff, increase class sizes, and cut programs and services because of a school-funding system that no longer works for children or their communities. Education funding is a state function and we know we must solve that problem to keep Wisconsin's schools competitive. The School Finance Network has proposed a solution, but the state's ongoing fiscal crisis makes it extremely difficult to move forward.

In the meantime, the first round of stabilization funds was crucial to maintaining Wisconsin's public schools. The state used the nearly \$800 million it received to stave off even deeper cuts in education. Without this aid, Wisconsin would have needed to slash more than 17 percent of funding for schools around the state, necessitating massive layoffs and greater elimination of academic programs and services for children.

Although the first round of stabilization has helped our state maintain a diminished status quo in terms of funding for our schools, more is now needed. While we have to change the way we fund our public schools, Wisconsin has a projected \$2.3 billion deficit for the 2011-13 biennium. This translates to a potential \$800 million of cuts in state aid to public schools in the next biennium. Because of this shortfall--and the fact that the state must balance its budget each biennium--there are likely to be severe cuts to vital services, including education.

Although we face making significant cuts to education, we know that the knowledge and skills of our students are more important than ever before. Research and common sense tell us that education promotes long-term economic growth for individuals as well as the state. Investments in education maintain employment, improve home values, and allow individuals to rise to their full potential, boosting their lifetime earnings. Education also increases productivity and creates the kind of highly-skilled workforce that is necessary for success in the future.

Only the federal government has the capacity and the means to further help the nation out of recession and into recovery. Leading economists suggest that a second round of state budget cuts could actually plunge the nation back into full recession as employees are laid off at state, county, and local levels. As these incomes evaporate, further downward pressure is placed on housing and consumption, and overall economic activity is depressed. Now, as much as ever, the government needs to maintain stimulus activity by keeping people employed.

COALITION PARTNERS

AFT - Wisconsin
www.aft-wisconsin.org

Fair Aid Coalition

School Administrators
Alliance
www.wsaa.org

Southeastern Wisconsin
Schools Alliance
www.schoolsalliance.com

Wisconsin Alliance for
Excellent Schools
www.excellentschools.org

Wisconsin Association
of School Boards
www.wasb.org

Wisconsin Association
of School District
Administrators
www.wasda.org

Wisconsin Education
Association Council
www.weac.org

Wisconsin Parent Teacher
Association (PTA)
www.wisconsinpta.org

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Ethically and morally, moreover, we owe it to each other to help our society in a time of need, and the federal government must set an example for others to follow. This nation has the resources — but we need leaders like you to create the political will to move forward.

While there will always be concerns about future deficits, we must have the courage now to invest in our students. As it has in the past, we know that this courage will be rewarded with a stronger, better-educated society and democracy and a strengthened economic and financial future.

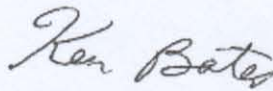
It is in this light that we encourage you to think of education as one of the best long-term strategies we have to help the economy grow and to help individuals succeed. Federal funding provides necessary support and paves the way for larger economic return.

Please do what you can to maintain state systems of public education during this ongoing recession in employment. Wall Street may be back, but Main Street is not. Two or more years of lost opportunity would be a fundamental mistake for long-term growth.

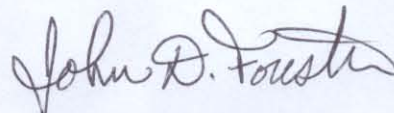
Sincerely,



Bryan Kennedy, President
AFT – Wisconsin



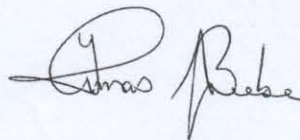
Ken Bates, President
Fair Aid Coalition



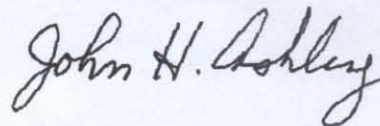
John Forester, Director
of Government
Relations
School Administrators
Alliance



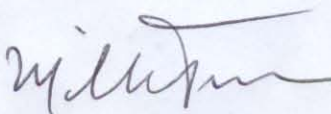
David Ewald, Co-Chair
Southeastern Wisconsin
Schools Alliance



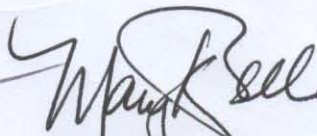
Tom Beebe, Executive
Director
Wisconsin Alliance for
Excellent Schools



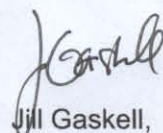
John Ashley, Executive
Director
Wisconsin Association
of School Boards



Miles Turner, Executive
Director
Wisconsin Association of
School District
Administrators



Mary Bell, President
Wisconsin Education
Association Council



Jill Gaskell,
State Legislative
Liaison
Wisconsin PTA