

BENNINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

www.benningtonschools.org



Dr. Terry Haack, Superintendent
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January 21, 2020

Senator Linehan
District 39
Room 1305, NE Capitol Building
PO Box 94604
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

Dear Senator Linehan and Members of the Revenue Committee:

The Bennington Public Schools District submits this letter in opposition to LB 974. We request that this letter be made a part of the public record.

Our district believes the bill, as written, will have unintended consequences on rapidly-growing school districts such as Bennington. We are asking the Committee to reconsider amending this bill to reflect the many additional needs of a growing school district.

Bennington Public Schools supports the prioritization of equalization aid. We understand and support the importance of the State assisting districts when local resources are not sufficient to cover the needs of students.

LB 974 provides foundation aid to all school districts regardless of their needs and resources. We are concerned that the funding levels for foundation aid may detract from the funding for the concept of Needs – Resources = Equalization Aid (state assistance). LB 974 does not address the costs associated with opening a new school, rising costs for local utilities, unfunded legislation, or other increases in the funding of a child's education that are not covered by growth factor in this legislation; rather it focuses on new construction, not additional student growth.

The provisions of LB 974 utilize revenue growth as the funding source. Current projections are that the current proposal will be short by \$130 million over the next three years. To our knowledge, there is no sustainable new revenue that will be added to this legislation thus making future revenue unlikely. LB 974 also lowers taxable valuation of both ag land and residential/commercial property over the next three years for school districts only.

Anchor Pointe Elementary Principal – Chad Boyes (402) 238-2166 Fax (402) 885-8604
Bennington Elementary Principal – Molly O'Connor (402) 238-2690 Fax (402) 238-2185
Pine Creek Elementary Principal – Dr. Shannon Thoendel (402) 238-2372 Fax (402) 238-2416
Heritage Elementary Principal – Therese Nelson (402) 238-2095 Fax (402) 238-3351
Bennington Middle School Principal – Shawn Hoppes (402) 238-3082 Fax (402) 916-5823
Bennington High School Principal – Dr. Matt Blomenkamp (402) 238-2447 Fax (402) 238-2950

Board of Education: Mark Byars, Valerie Calderon, Heather Goertz, Kara Neuwerth,
Brad Renter, Darren Siekman,

The mission of the Bennington Public Schools is to provide educational opportunities in a safe, caring environment that will prepare all students to meet the challenges of the future.

For a growing district like Bennington, continued persistent growth puts pressure on both our facilities and general fund budget. This year our district opened our fourth elementary building and plan to open our fifth elementary and second middle school in the next two years. The elimination of the system averaging adjustment is very concerning to our district as we become more efficient as we continue to grow in student population. Doing our own modeling over the past ten years, we estimate that Bennington Public Schools would lose approximately \$2.4 million, or 7.5% of our general fund budget.

We appreciate Senator Linehan addressing the concerns of many with a plan to reduce the reliance on property taxes to fund the education of over 300,000 students in the state of Nebraska; however, Bennington Public Schools is still very concerned that LB 974 ties budget increases with only a CPI indicator and the percentage increase in new assessed valuation. There are many factors that our school district has to address when building a budget. Not only do we have to hire personnel to meet the demanding needs of our increasing student population, but we also have to budget resources for additional classroom space necessary for the additional students who enroll in our school district every year. Bennington Public Schools would like to see these many factors added to a calculation for budget growth applicable to school districts.

Bennington Public Schools appreciates your efforts in addressing the needs of all public school children Thank you for your time this afternoon. Our school district would be willing to help with the development of any amendment that allows for rapidly-growing districts like ours to meet the needs of our children.

Sincerely,



Terry L. Haack
Superintendent