



# Maplewood Richmond Heights School District

MRH Board of Education

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April 25, 2024

Governor Parson,

Throughout your years as an elected leader, you have been a defender and supporter of public education. Just as you have been elected as Governor to defend Missouri's best interests, as a member of the Maplewood Richmond Heights School Board I have been elected by my community to represent their interests in public education. I am reaching out to urge you to veto Senate Bill 727. I have been a member of the Maplewood Richmond Heights School Board since April 2014. My community is one that takes pride in our schools and values high quality public education for our children. I think we can both agree that to retain our best and brightest teachers we must find a sustainable way to increase teacher pay. However, this legislation is not the answer. Senate Bill 727 is fiscally irresponsible and will bankrupt either the state budget or local school districts.

As Governor, you have championed providing schools the funding they need through the Foundation Formula, historic levels of transportation funding, baseline teacher salary grants, pre-K grants, and many other legacy initiatives. Missouri has invested billions into education, but I fear that this legislation will overextend the state's financial resources. This legislation - when fully implemented - has a price tag of nearly half a billion dollars. That would be in addition to the upcoming increase in the state adequacy target. How can I feel confident that our state budget can support - either through actual dollars or political will - an additional \$800 million for K-12 education when current budget leaders in the House have either openly opposed or stated they do not want to maintain minimum teacher pay grants at the current level. Teacher pay increases deserve a sustainable funding solution, not one that is built on a house of cards. If legislators are not going to hold up their end of the bargain, the responsibility will fall to those of us at the local districts to financially manage through the Missouri General Assembly's bad policy.

As a school board member, I am tasked with setting a balanced budget for my district. While there are provisions in this bill that increase statutory minimum teacher pay, the bill does not ensure state funding will be appropriated this year or any subsequent year to support such an increase. Our district is fortunate to already meet the minimum teacher pay requirement set out in Senate Bill 727, but I fear that if the teacher pay increase is funded for other districts at the expense of the Foundation Formula or school transportation, we as the board may be left to make up the difference with budget cuts or local tax increases. I worry that this legislation will result not in increased investment in education, but in a shell game with the limited dollars available, jeopardizing the financial solvency of our district.

I hope that you will stand up to those who are seeking to sell unpopular policy by hiding it behind false fiscal promises. Veto Senate Bill 727 and solidify your legacy as a Governor who stands up for Missouri: our kids, our schools and our state's financial future.

***Katie Kaufmann***

Katie Kaufmann, Director

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