Northwest Education Services

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Sept. 23, 2022

Village of Northport
Attn: President Steve Wetherbee, Clerk Joni Scott
116 W. Nagonaba St.
Northport, MI 49670

Village Leadership,

In partnership with local school districts throughout our service area, Northwest Education Services ("North Ed"; formerly Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District) has placed a restoration millage proposal on the ballot that, if approved, would allow us to maintain the current levy to support programming and services for Special Education students in our region.

Voters in the Nov. 8, 2022 election will be asked to consider a 0.5-mill restoration millage for a period of 10 years (2023-32), which would – if approved – allow North Ed to **maintain the existing regional Special Education levy at its current rate** and offset potential future reductions permitted under the Headlee Amendment.

I would like to stress the fact that North Ed currently levies 2 mills to support Special Education regionally, and taxpayers would not see that levy increase if the proposal is approved by voters. Instead, if approved, the replacement millage would only be levied to the extent necessary to restore Headlee reductions and to maintain a level 2-mill Special Education levy.

Many of the students we serve require teams of highly qualified educators and support staff, along with specialized equipment and facilities that can be costly. As educators we have an obligation to serve all students, including those with the greatest needs. In fact, local school districts in Michigan are *legally required* to ensure Special Education students are provided a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) from birth to age 26.

If approved, the restoration millage would continue to ease the financial burden associated with Special Education for local school districts, allowing their general fund dollars to be used on other priorities, as determined by the local district – which could include community facilities, programming and services for all students and other general operating expenditures.

The total millage presently available to North Ed for Special Education is 2.0354 mills, of which we currently levy and have historically collected only 2 mills. However, should that available millage drop below 2 mills due to Headlee rollbacks, North Ed's ability to levy the 2-mill amount is eliminated, meaning less funding for Special Education regionally. For each 0.1 mill that the levy is reduced, there is a loss of $1.39 million in revenue to support Special Education in our region. The restoration millage, if supported by voters, would essentially serve as an insurance policy by offsetting potential future reductions caused by Headlee rollbacks.

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Our current 2-mill levy generates about $27.5 million regionally and is the largest source of Special Education funding. Federal and state sources provide roughly $6.4 million and $19.2 million, respectively. Still, the cost to provide Special Education services to students already outweighs these state and federal sources, *and* the regional millage. Any unfunded costs related to Special Education are the responsibility of our local school districts, which collectively used $9 million from their general funds to cover the financial gaps during the 2020-21 school year.

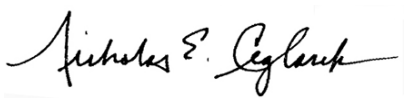
If approved by voters, the restoration millage would continue to directly support students who require specialized instruction and equipment, and provide financial support to local school districts who must meet their legal responsibility of ensuring Special Education students are able to receive the services they need.

We hope this letter helps inform your constituents of the Special Education millage proposal, and we invite you to review our webpage at www.tinyurl.com/NorthEdMillage, which has more information.

Lastly, we encourage everyone who is eligible to exercise their right and duty to participate in our democracy by voting in the Nov. 8 election.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Thank you very much,



Dr. Nick Ceglarek
Superintendent
Northwest Education Services

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