



8706 Manchester Rd., Suite 104, St. Louis, MO 63144
314-961-6869 ★ league@lwvmissouri.org ★ www.lwvmissouri.org

Nov.18, 2021

Dr. Margie Vandeven, Commissioner
Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education
205 Jefferson Street
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Dr. Vandeven:

As you prepare your priorities for the upcoming year, the League of Women Voters of Missouri is asking that additional dollars be allocated to schools that operate in our state's most disadvantaged communities.

Missouri provides less funding for its K-12 public schools than any other state in the nation. In most states, school districts get 2/3 of their revenue from the state and only rely on local property taxes for 1/3 of their revenue. School districts in Missouri get just a third of their revenue from the state and are forced to rely heavily on local property taxes for 2/3 of their revenue. This results in gross inequity in school funding and therefore resources. School districts with low property values and whose students predominantly come from low-income families do not receive equal or even adequate resources in their public schools and generally under perform on MSIP exams.

While Missouri pretends that funding inequities are remedied through the Foundation Formula, they are not. Centuries of social, cultural, educational, health, nutrition, housing and employment deprivation and discrimination have taken a toll on the ability of children concentrated in these school districts from learning with the same success rate as children from families who were not subject to deprivation and discrimination.

Children from families who have suffered systemic deprivation need additional resources to meet their potential for success. ***Equitable funding is not equal funding. Equitable funding provides what each child needs.***

Legislation to legalize betting on sports teams will be submitted during the 2022 legislative session. It has been proposed that the proceeds be allotted to public education and roads. But the Legislature does not usually favor increasing revenue so when they approve a new source of revenue, they accompany it with tax cuts elsewhere rendering the new source revenue neutral. Such a policy cannot result in equitable school funding. It is not acceptable to deprive already under funded school districts of needed revenue to provide other districts with more funding to produce equity. What is needed is a commitment to increase revenue so that equitable disbursement does not cannibalize other school districts.

We are asking for additional funding to achieve **equity** for schools in high poverty districts as outlined below.

- Lower class size (following DESE's "desirable" class sizes standard in all classes)
 - Universal Pre-K with state approved curriculum and certified teachers at 10:1 student/teacher ratio beginning at age 3
 - Full day kindergarten, enriched literacy and vocabulary programming
 - Enhanced school libraries, books for home libraries, and technology (including desktop and laptop computers, tablets, interactive white boards, hot spots, and broadband access)
 - Mentoring and support for all first-year teachers provided by mentor teachers,
 - Funding for Parents as Teachers and full-service, community-based schools with wrap around resources for families
 - \$4,000 stipend per teacher per academic year in high-poverty districts
 - An additional \$2,000 stipend per academic year for tenured teachers in high-poverty districts after completion of each 10 years to recognize continued service
 - 5% salary increase for all sixth (6th) year teachers in high poverty districts who have satisfactorily completed probation
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Support for and advocacy for K-12 public education is a priority of the League of Women Voters. We look forward to meeting with you to discuss how we and our community partners can institute a public engagement program that will advance our shared interest in ensuring that children concentrated in high-poverty neighborhoods have the same opportunities for success as those in wealthier districts.

League representatives will contact you for follow-up of this request within the upcoming week. These representatives are Joan Hubbard, Chairman of the MO State LWV Education Committee and Susan Turk, Chairman of the Metro St. Louis LWV Education Committee.

Very truly yours,



Marilyn McLeod, President
League of Women Voters of Missouri

Cc: Joan Hubbard
Susan Turk
