

Herscher Community Unit School District No. 2

DR. RICHARD S. DECMAN, SUPERINTENDENT
SHELLY PARSONS, SPECIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR
PETE FALK, CURRICULUM DIRECTOR

04/15/2016

Dear Herscher CUSD No. 2 Parent/Community Member,

I am writing to you regarding Senator Manar's new school funding proposal, SB231. I am extremely concerned about the impact SB231 will have on our school district and the taxpayers we serve. My understanding of SB231 is that it is an attempt to "level the playing field" by taking money away from high EAV school districts (Equalized Assessed Value or total value of all land/buildings) and funneling that money to school districts with lower EAVs. It is unfortunate that the Illinois legislature is resorting to a "Robin Hood" approach as the only avenue to increase the fiscal resources of some school districts in Illinois. The idea that reapportioning money to some school districts will increase the educational opportunity for those students also works in the opposite direction. If \$700,000/year (estimated loss in State revenue to Herscher CUSD No. 2, if SB 231 passes) is removed from our school district budget, not only will educational programming have to be cut considerably, but the resulting tax rate charged to our residents will also increase dramatically. Such an approach that creates winners and losers is not the way to improve the education system in Illinois.

SB231 also does not take into account the unique circumstances of our school district. We are one of the largest districts in the State of Illinois in respect to land area (Over 250 square miles). Our District contains large areas of farm ground, the Pilot Hill Wind Turbine Farm and the Kinder-Morgan storage facility. These facilities in combination with our various residential developments create significant local property tax dollars. However, our citizens have also accepted the annoyances of the wind turbines, the large distance of travel to our different educational facilities and the overall issues related to living in a large rural school district.

The local property taxes generated from our school district's large area are much different than the EAV-rich suburban districts in that their EAV comes with the conveniences of shopping malls, restaurants, and big box stores. Our taxpayers should be entitled to reap the tax benefits that come with living in a large, rural setting knowing that a considerable amount of the tax money is spent to offset the issues associated with providing services in our school district. In addition, if passed, SB231 will penalize our school district for being fiscally responsible (maintaining reserve funds) and for having only approximately 28% of students who are considered low income. In other words, we are not considered "poor" enough to qualify for additional funds in the SB 231. The current education funding formula addresses these issues in a fair and equitable manner, only if fully funded by the State. Further, many politicians and others have been quoted as saying the current funding formula is out-dated and does not work. To repeat this is not true, if the State fully funds schools.

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Finally, SB231 incorrectly assumes that all high EAV school districts are overspending and can easily cut up to 10% from their budgets. It is dangerous and incorrect to automatically assume that such districts are not running as efficiently as possible. When comparing what the Chicago Public Schools spend per pupil compared to other supposedly EAV-rich school districts, you might be surprised to find that CPS outspends most of those school districts. Yet, my understanding of SB231 is that another \$200 million annually will be removed from the other school districts across the state and reallocated to CPS. Herscher School District is very proud of how efficiently we run our organization, and to assume we can cut \$700,000/year from our budget without drastically cutting programming is an incorrect assumption. Losing \$700,000/year from our budget will force our school board to make some serious, and unfortunate, decisions regarding staffing and future programming for our students.

I strongly encourage you to contact your respective legislators and let them know how you feel about SB231. If SB231 were to pass it would have a devastating impact to our children's education and our communities as well. Please take a few minutes to send an e-mail, write a letter or call your respective Representatives or Senators. I have attached the contact information for the State Representatives and Senators for our area for your convenience. Thank you for your help!

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard S. Decman
Superintendent, Herscher CUSD No. 2

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Senator Toi Hutchinson (D) 40th District

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Senator Sue Rezin (R) 38th District

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Senator Jason A. Barickman (R) 53rd District

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State Senator Andy Manar (D) 48th District

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(link is to a contact form on his website)

Representative Kate Cloonen (D) 79th District

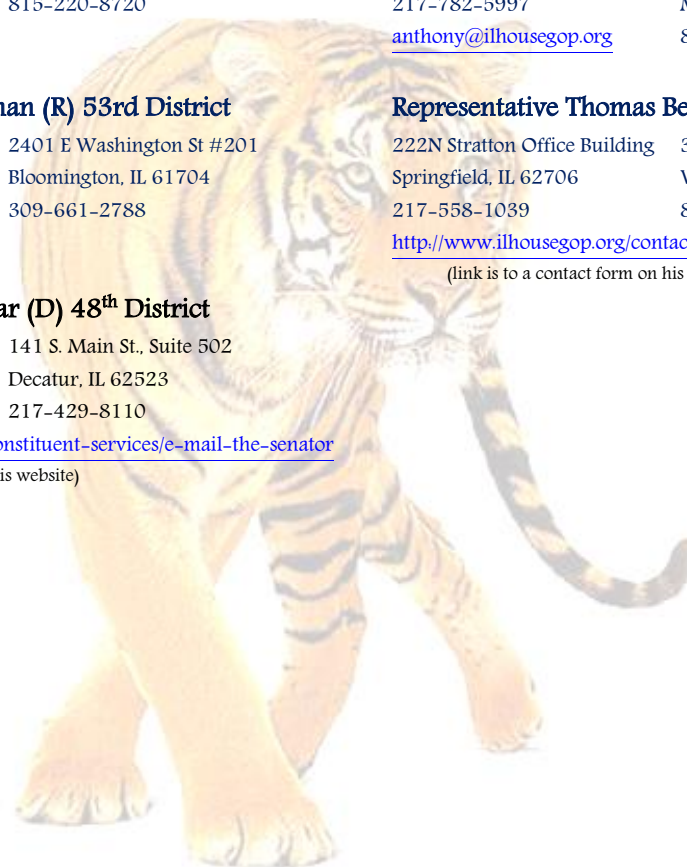
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Representative John D. Anthony (R) 75th District

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Representative Thomas Bennett (R) 106th District

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(link is to a contact form on his website)



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