

Dear Senator Garrett,

I am writing to express my deep and urgent opposition to House File 319 and the proposed 2.25% State Supplemental Aid (SSA) rate for the upcoming fiscal year. As a school principal, an Iowa public educator for the past eleven years, and—perhaps most importantly—a parent of two young boys just beginning their journey in our public education system, I cannot stand by while our schools are asked to do more with less yet again.

Every day, I walk the halls of my elementary school and see firsthand the impact of chronic underfunding. I see teachers stretching themselves thin, working late into the evening to create engaging lessons despite fewer resources. I see students who need more one-on-one support but cannot always get it because our budget does not allow for the staffing required to meet every need. And as a parent, I see my own sons—bright, curious, and eager to learn—walking into a school system that is being systematically stripped of the very resources that should be expanding their potential, not limiting it.

Public schools in Iowa have been underfunded for the past decade, with SSA failing to keep pace with inflation and the rising costs of providing a high-quality education. Meanwhile, large amounts of taxpayer dollars continue to be funneled into private school voucher programs, diverting critical resources away from the 485,000 students who attend Iowa's public schools. Public education should be a top priority, not an afterthought.

The Legislative Services Agency's Fiscal Note for SF 167 makes it clear that a 2% SSA increase is woefully inadequate. It results in a \$7.5 million reduction in State aid to AEAs, a decrease in preschool formula funding, and a forced reliance on local property tax increases to make up the shortfall. These are not just numbers on a spreadsheet; they represent real cuts that will impact real students, including my own children.

In my district alone, we are projected to lose \$3.5 million over the next five years. That means fewer teachers in classrooms, fewer resources for intervention programs, and fewer opportunities for students to receive the individualized support they need to thrive. We are already discussing difficult decisions—cutting staff positions, reducing curriculum enhancements, and scaling back enrichment programs—all to make ends meet under these inadequate funding levels.

If we want to ensure high-quality education and increased student achievement, we must invest in public schools at a level that reflects both our values and our children's needs. House File 319 does not do that. Instead, it pushes our schools further into a cycle of scarcity, forcing districts to cut corners where they should be expanding horizons.

I urge you to vote **NO** on House File 319 and instead fight for meaningful investment in our public education system. Our children's future—and the future of Iowa—depends on the choices we make today.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and share more about the direct impact this bill would have on our students, teachers, and communities.

Sincerely,

Dr. Taelar Spindler