

September 13, 2023

Dear Senator Donald Schaible and School Funding Task Force Committee Members,

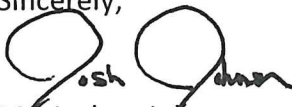
On behalf of a small group of school districts (Belfield, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Oakes, Larimore, Valley City, and Williston), I write this letter officially requesting the opportunity for our school construction coalition to present to you and the members of the North Dakota School Funding Task Force Committee Members at an upcoming meeting. Our group, consisting of teachers, administrators, and school board members, believe that many school districts, all across North Dakota, are facing unprecedented school facility and construction challenges. Below is one of the school district facility challenges that we would like to highlight at an upcoming meeting. Besides the challenges, we would like to discuss solutions with your committee and present ideas that could significantly improve school facilities in North Dakota for the short and long-term.

For the past two years, Valley City Public School District has been studying school facilities and looking into either remodeling or replacing the 1919 high school. During this study, the cost of construction has increased by more than 63% and the cost to build a new high school has exceeded the maximum bonding authority of \$40 million. While many in the community have offered their support for a new high school, this is no longer an option for the school district. To date, we have identified more than \$20 million in basic capital maintenance needs at the high school including the re-location of the school offices (school security), roofing, windows, and all of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. The question continuously asked in Valley City over the past two years has been, is it fiscally responsible for the school district to invest \$20 million dollars into an outdated and aging facility that is more than 104 years old? This is just one example facing K-12 school districts in North Dakota that need capital improvements and are unable to fund these projects due to rising construction costs, significant impacts on property taxes, and low bonding authority.

Since our initial meeting held this summer, our coalition has concentrated our discussions and efforts on proposing solutions to the current school facility and construction challenges. We welcome the opportunity to bring forth the reality of our challenges and propose the ideas that could have a positive impact on various sizes of school districts all across the state of North Dakota.

Thank you very much for your service to the state of North Dakota and your hard work and contributions to improving education for the students in North Dakota. On behalf of our coalition, we appreciate your consideration of our request and look forward to meeting with the North Dakota School Funding Task Force Committee Members. If you have any questions or would like additional information, I may be reached via phone at 701.845.0483 or email at josh.johnson@k12.nd.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "J".

Mr. Joshua Johnson
Superintendent
Valley City Public School