

Dear XXXXX XXXXXX,

The Carmel Clay Board of School Trustees, along with our Superintendent and administrative team, thank you for your commitment to the citizens of our state and specifically to the children of Indiana. We offer our support to our legislators and Secretary Jenner to develop initiatives to promote the profession of teaching as a noble, respected, and rewarding career in service to the children and families of Indiana. The increased funding for teacher salaries in the last session was a huge step forward, both in making Indiana teacher income more competitive with surrounding states, but also in communicating that our state values educators.

Unfortunately, with the current shortage of teachers, the low enrollment of students in university education programs, and the alarming data of only 1 in 6 students studying education actually pursue a career in teaching, we are entering an even more critical time in Indiana educational history.

If we don't work together to turn this trend, Hoosier students will not receive the quality education that parents and community members expect. It is our current students and the students of the next generations who will ultimately bear the repercussions. Strong schools are the key to growing vibrant communities and attracting families, professionals, and businesses to choose Indiana as their home. With so much at stake, it is imperative that we inspire and encourage young people to join the teaching profession.

The depleting workforce is the most tangible consequence of the current environment and we hear many reasons and sources of blame for the current optics causing a negative view of the education profession. It is important that we move forward together and seize the opportunity to compassionately restore the higher calling of being a professional educator. These are the people who teach the skills that make a positive difference in the lives of children today and into the future.

In this pivotal time when education is facing critical employment shortages, we think that aggressive educator recruitment and retention must be a top consideration when developing education policy. Evaluating all policy proposals through this lens is imperative. We can set Indiana apart by sending clear messages to current and future educators that they are valued, trusted, and that we have their backs. Anything less could result in a crisis-level lack of educators which will have a detrimental impact on our current students and communities for generations to come.

Our goal is to partner with you, our state leaders, by being a credible resource from the field on matters related to educating our children. We also want to serve as a resource to help minimize negative financial or organizational consequences that sometimes occur when implementing even the best-intended policy. We are in a unique position to share "boots on the ground" information on how regulation and compliance plays out at the local level.

While there are many issues relevant to education where we can be helpful, here are some common interests we have identified and offer our help as a resource:

- **Recruiting and Retaining the Education Workforce:** School districts are currently in an “all-hands-on-deck” approach to fill high-need teaching positions and other critical shortages like bus drivers and food service workers, but almost all positions are difficult to fill. This effort is critical to keeping our schools fully operational and keeping our communities strong.
- **Civility and Decorum:** Returning our school environments to places where civil discourse is the norm and school personnel, parents, and community members have the opportunity to be heard and respected is critical to moving forward in a more positive trajectory. It is imperative for all stakeholders to thoughtfully partner together to meet the needs of all students and families we serve.
- **Student Support:** Continuing to develop support systems to assist students with academic, physical, mental health, and social needs remains a top priority in Indiana schools. It is our responsibility to use all tools available to enable students to access the educational programming needed to learn and grow to be independent thinkers who have the skills necessary to be successful.
- **Lessons Learned from COVID-19:** We offer to share our perspective on both positive and negative lessons learned from the pandemic.

Once again, thank you for your commitment to the education of the children of Indiana. We at Carmel Clay Schools stand ready to partner with you as a resource from the field on all matters related to educating our children. We are committed to doing our part to promote Indiana as a destination where educators are valued, respected, want to serve, and a place with strong schools where families want to live and raise their kids.




Dr. Michael Beresford  
Superintendent



Mrs. Katie Browning  
School Board President



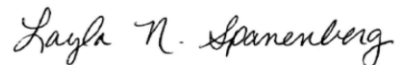
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