

Debra Thompson

From: Brian Smith <brmsmith6@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 12:42 PM
To: Assembly
Subject: Borough support for school district funding

Hello Petersburg Borough Assembly members,

I want to convey the importance of the Borough sufficiently funding our local school district. I'm reaching out now because of the upcoming work session on this subject on February 29.

I'm representing my views as a parent of two young children, advocating for the long-term strength of our Petersburg educational system. I'm also president of our Partners in Education organization, although I am not attempting to represent that organization with my comments.

I'm not trying to sound alarmist, but I do have concerns about the trajectory of the quality of our educational system if we don't take active steps to increase our support of it. The state's funding for education has been truly inadequate in addition to being uncertain. It has not come anywhere near keeping up with inflation, and there have been one-time / temporary funding increases but a total of less than 1% increase in permanent per student funding since **2017**. I personally and in my small leadership role with PiE have been doing what I can to advocate for sufficient state education funding with our state legislators and governor. And I hope you have, too, as our local elected officials. But with the lack of action at the state level, our local government needs to step up. I've been attending the teacher contract negotiations, and discussions at that forum have left me wondering about the strength of our local support.

The prime reason for my alarm about our trajectory is our ability to recruit new high quality teachers and staff when positions open up. I've seen multiple teaching positions remain open into the start of the school year this year and last, sometimes only filled temporarily by retired teachers who come back solely for the good of our community's children. I also see things like the KFSK article from just last month about the 4th grade teacher that was hired at the beginning of this school year but stopped teaching just before Christmas. We need to make sure the salary and benefits we offer are competitive enough to attract the best qualified candidates that we want long-term in our schools and community. I'm deeply concerned about our ability to recruit great new teachers, and concerned about what that means for our district, while my kids are in school for the next 14 years, if we don't course correct quickly.

We all want our community to be a vibrant, thriving place, and a strong school district that parents want their kids to be in is a core aspect of that. As you go into this upcoming work session on the subject of education funding, please support funding our district to the maximum ability of the Borough.

Thank you,
Brian Smith