Farmington PUBLIC SCHOOLS

On the road to becoming America's premier 21st century school district...

Susan H. Zurvalec
Superintendent

Karen L. Bolsen
President
Howard I. Wallach
Vice President
Frank L. Reid
Secretary
Priscilla L. Brouillette
Treasurer
Deborah L. Brauer
Trustee
Shellah P. Clay
Trustee
Gary D. Sharp
Trustee

March 23, 2007

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg
United States Congress
2349 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressman Knollenberg:

At the request of the Farmington Board of Education, I have attached another copy of my January 3 letter to you regarding Head Start services.

Board members continue to express their concern that the needs of our youngest children are not being met because of a lack of adequate funding for Head Start preschool programs. Currently in our District, there is a waiting list of 30 children for these vital services. This cannot continue.

In the last year alone, children enrolled in our Head Start program received treatment for anemia, hearing and vision problems, weight issues, asthma, child abuse and neglect, and low stature. Without the support of our legislators in Lansing and at the federal level, children and families cannot get the help they desperately need.

It is proven that preschool educational programs, such as Head Start, can boost development and school readiness. Both parent education and preschool programs can also contribute to closing the achievement gap which exists in low-income families and which are disproportionately minority.

In the spirit of "No Child Left Behind," we urge you and your fellow legislators to support increased funding for Head Start to ensure the well-being and success of each and every child.

Sincerely,

Susan H. Zurvalec

Susan H. Zurvalec
Superintendent

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January 3, 2007

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg
United States House of Representatives
2349 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressman Knollenberg:

I am writing you on behalf of the Farmington Public Schools Board of Education to request that you continue to support and advocate increased funding for Head Start preschool programs. Farmington Public Schools has operated Head Start preschool programs for over twenty years servicing the children of low income families within our school district. Recently, the administration has sought to reduce Head Start funding. This could not come at a worse time for many families given the downturn in the Michigan economy and significant increases in job losses. Currently, we have almost 40 families who have begun the process for enrollment in Head Start. They are on a waiting list for placement because the federal agency has not released sufficient funds to service these children. Many of these children will begin kindergarten without a preschool experience.

It is now well established by research that a quality preschool education, such as Head Start, can significantly improve school readiness and reduce achievement gaps for low income and minority children. Attached is a policy brief from the Initiative on Children and Families at the Brookings Institution that concludes that "two types of programs, those that help parents learn the behaviors that promote child development and school readiness and those that directly teach low-income children school readiness skills, seem the most promising." Our Head Start programs address both of these needs. As a very diverse community, we are seeing many more children begin school without the pre-literacy skills necessary for success in reading, the most fundamental building block of all learning. Providing adequate financial support for Head Start is one very important step the Congress and President can make to ensure that truly no child is left behind.

I thank you for your consideration of this very important issue. Please feel free to contact me at 248.489.3339 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Susan H Zurvalec

Susan H. Zurvalec
Superintendent of Schools

c: Board of Education; N. Ely, director of early childhood education; K. Jules, supervisor, Head Start

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August 30, 2006

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg
United States House of Representatives
2349 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressman Knollenberg:

We are writing on behalf of Farmington Public Schools to express our district's strong opposition to proposed administrative changes to the school-based Medicaid program in the Administration's fiscal year 2007 budget, and to urge you to contact Michael Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services, to let him know you oppose these changes in Medicaid reimbursements for children in our school district.

Currently, the President's budget proposes to restrict the ability of schools to claim reimbursement for administrative and transportation services for Medicaid-enrolled children with disabilities who receive early intervention, special education and related services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. We are very concerned that this action would reduce the availability of and access to needed health and developmental services for many Farmington students with disabilities and other low-income children with special needs.

Farmington Public Schools provides local and center-based special education services for over 1,500 students with disabilities. Under the Medicaid Catastrophic Coverage Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-360) school districts are allowed to receive payment from Medicaid for health services delivered to Medicaid-eligible children with disabilities who need diagnostic, preventive, and rehabilitative services; speech, physical and occupational therapies; and transportation for such services. In addition, school districts may claim reimbursement for the administrative costs of providing school-based Medicaid services such as outreach for enrollment purposes, and coordination and/or monitoring of medical care.

We play a key role in identifying eligible children for Medicaid and connecting them to needed services in schools and the community. Schools are ideal places to provide these services because students must attend school and professional specialists are available onsite. The loss of administrative and

32500 Shiawassee Street • Farmington, Michigan 48336-2338 • 248.489.3300 • Fax: 248.489.3348
Web Site: www.farmington.k12.mi.us

transportation reimbursement would hurt our district's efforts to provide these services, resulting in eligible children not being identified and not receiving needed services in a timely manner.

The loss of over $1 million in Medicaid reimbursements will create further reductions in services, such as occupational and speech therapies, behavioral modification, counseling, dental and mental health care, and clinic or hospital-based services. Farmington Public Schools has already made over $20 million in budget reductions in the last five years due to inadequate funding from state and federal governments.

Both the Michigan Association of School Boards and the Michigan Association of School Administrators strongly oppose these proposed cuts. We are aware that your colleague, Congressman McCotter, has signed a letter along with 80 other Republican members of Congress to Michael Leavitt clearly stating that the Department of Health and Human Services should not cut school-based services. We urge you to join with them to go on the record opposing these cuts to our neediest children.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Susan H. Zurvalec
Superintendent

Karen L. Bolsen
President
Board of Education

Frank L. Reid
President
MASB

c: Farmington Board of Education ✓
Brian Whiston, Director, Government & Comm. Affairs, Oakland Schools
Michele Harmala, Farmington Public Schools, Special Education Director
Robert Moore, Deputy Superintendent, Oakland Schools
Justin King, MASB
Bill Mayes, MASA