Testimony re. HF 136 Feb. 6, 2017

Members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee regarding Iowa's funding for public schools, HF 136.

I'm Dr. Bob Olson, School Superintendent of the Clarion-Goldfield-Dows CSD and Chair of Rural School Advocates of Iowa.

An increase of 1.11% in State Supplemental Assistance, is not sufficient to fund demands on school districts without further cutting staff and programs for students. If this percentage is enacted, the continued cost of doing business in schools will have exceeded the percentage increase set by this body in 7 of the last 8 school years. In rural schools, the effects are dramatic.

The list of expectations designed to improve schools by the state and federal level often do not include adequate funding to comply. Students are coming to our schools today with more challenges than ever. Iowa's future workforce, economy and standard of living depend on your investment in students.

Districts like mine all over the state are challenged to find teachers, with shortage areas defined by the department of education growing. When I was a shared superintendent in 1989 for Clarion and Goldfield (before reorganization in 1993), we would receive 400 applications for a single elementary teaching position. Today, we may receive 15, with many not quite meeting our standards.

Thank you for sparing K-12 education from budget cuts and making this funding decision early in the legislative session. I encourage you to keep working on investing in schools and addressing inequities, including the state foundation formula that gives some schools as much as

$175 more per student than their neighbors. All students deserve the highest CCPP. This could be fixed over time in the same manner as the phase out of phantom students.

In rural Iowa, school transportation costs are an increasingly larger portion of our local budget. We share a transportation director with Eagle Grove. Together, his responsibility

includes a geographic area second only to Western Dubuque.

We look forward to working with you to make sure all of Iowa's children are educated. I end with two quotes. Lester Thurow, Professor of Economics and Management, at MIT, wrote1985:

"Social welfare programs may be a matter of ethics and generosity, but education and training are not. I am willing to pay for, indeed insist upon, the education of my neighbor's children, not because I am generous, but because I cannot afford to live with them uneducated."

Benjamin Franklin also wrote, 11 An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest. 11