

Molly M. Spearman

The Honorable Nikki Haley

Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor Haley,

I am writing as a concerned citizen of Clarendon County School District 3. I want to express my gratitude for your strong leadership of our great state of South Carolina.

The purpose of this letter is to express our dire need for funding in Clarendon School District 3. CSD3 currently ranks in the top 5 schools in the state for test scores and overall performance. We have been blanketed with awards and achievements. Yet we remain the 2nd lowest funded school district in the state. Ironically, in school district 3, we are the 8th highest taxed school district in the state based on millage rate. As compared to the other 2 districts in Clarendon County, we pay 3-4 times more property taxes in District 3 as citizens pay in Districts 1 and 2. Yet our school (per child) funding is up to 4 times lower. Assessed funding value per child in CSD3 is approximately \$7,000, in District 2- \$18,000, and in District 1- \$39,000 per child per year. We have many out of district students-some pay, whereas others have gotten by. Many of these students do not have land recorded in their names, and others are allowed to slip by at registration because it is not a requirement to show a utility bill.

We have not had art or music in our entire district for over 5 years. I am sure you know how valuable and beneficial these programs are to our children. Numerous studies show that children exposed to art and music in schools both behave better in class and perform better on tests. Other subject area and programs have been cut too. **What are these funds now being used for?**

CSD3 has made cut after cut to try and meet budgets yearly while Districts 1 and 2 enjoy I-Pads, marching bands, art, music, and drama programs. While CSD3 kids go without ALL of these. Yet our athletic fields and sporting facilities

are very adequate to support these types of athletic events. Land has been purchased twice for athletic purposes. Buses and other vehicles have been purchased too! **Does this district not write any grants?**

Despite these cuts and GROSS underfunding, we manage to outperform Districts 1 and 2 in test scores and overall performance as well as many other areas. This not only sends the wrong message to our taxpayers, but MOST of all, our students. The message being sent should be Hard work + Dedicated faculty=Success and Rewards. Instead the exact opposite message is being sent. Employees are only being paid once a month. They had furloughs for two years while the spending of money continued on the athletic facilities.

Recently, our school board proposed to change the language regarding the use of 1% sales tax. The current language allows for the excess money (after school debt has been paid down) to be used for land purchases, building construction and renovations. CSD3 asked for the language to be changes slightly in order for the money to be used for operating expenses as well. We also asked for a larger portion of the money. We hoped this extra money would aid us in operations cost (we have been using our reserves for operations cost) ***as well as*** improvements to our school. Please investigate as to where the money has been going for the 1% money? The district website is not keep up to date, and the financial reports are very sketchy and lack adequate details. Look at where the checks are being written. Wow!

We did this in effort as NOT to raise/add any additional taxes to the citizens of Clarendon County and not to financially harm the other school districts in Clarendon County either.

However, County Council (who has the sole power to change the language) as well as Districts 1 and 2 are not interested in giving us the ability to use our funds we so desperately need and have requested.

I am pleading as a heavily taxed citizen of this County, that you intervene and help us find a solution to our situation here in CSD3. The children and teachers of CSD3 MATTER!!!!

funds in the amount of \$ 169,000, as well as a \$ 225,000 grant for technology in partnership with Spartanburg and District #3. She reported that academically, District #3 has had a good year - 82.6% passed the exit exam. She reported that they moved into the new District office and the building is debt free. She provided information on the academic and athletic achievements of Walker Gamble and East Clarendon High School which included Gold Awards, Silver Awards, athletic awards in volley ball, tennis, baseball, basketball, etc. Dr. Dennis commented that everyone worked especially hard administrators, teachers and students - to make this happen and "I am glad to be able to support them." Chairman Stewart thanked Dr. Dennis for her report and for the excellent achievements of District #3. He then recognized **Sandra Bagnal, the Finance Director**, who presented the FY 2010-2011 Budget for District #3.

Director Bagnal prefaced her presentation with the comment that her report would be one of "doom and gloom" relative to the financial aspect of District #3. She reported that District #3's Budget reflects no increase due to a negative population growth this year and that they are requesting no additional funds. The FY 2010 Budget sustained a decrease in revenue in the General Fund, as well as Budget cuts of 9.04%, for a total revenue decrease of \$775,461 in 2010. She reported that District #3 received \$ 423,634 in Stimulus Funding; that they furloughed 2.5 days for teachers and 5 days for administration. She reported adjusted insurance premiums of \$ 165,000 reflected negatively and added to the budget deficit. For FY 2011, she reported an anticipated reduced revenue of \$ 424,442, reduced stimulus of \$ 220,700 which will result in an anticipated deficit of \$ 832,013. She stated that they were forced to cut 4 teachers, cut music and art from middle and high schools; cut guidance counselors; and cut retirees' salaries by 10%. She stated that the new budget calls for teachers and support staff to be furloughed 5 days and administration 10 days.

Director Bagnal reported that even with these reductions, the Budget is \$ 320,000 short and that the Board voted to take this amount from the Fund Balance to balance the budget. She stated that some adjustments will still need to be made but that they expect no extra funding for this year. She requested permission to issue a TAN (Tax Anticipation Note), should it become necessary, in an amount not to exceed \$ 500,000. She stated that they may experience another 2.5% cut but will have \$ 1 million dollars remaining in fund balance after using fund balance to balance the budget for 2011. Bagnal commented that District #3 is hoping to reflect an increase in real estate values. Councilman Blakely thanked Ms. Bagnal and Dr. Dennis for the fine job they are doing in District #3 schools. Chairman Stewart expressed his appreciation as did Vice-Chairman Frierson for the "great job the District #3 staff does in meeting the educational needs of District #3."

3) Clarendon School District #2. Superintendent John Tindal **thanked Council** for "all you have done for District #2 over the years" and for the opportunity to present the FY 2011 Budget. He recognized the District #2 Board members in attendance: Chairman Ceth Land, David Epperson and Ethel Sweat and thanked them for their attendance. He presented highlights of the FY 2009-2010 school year, as follows: