

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley

Office of the Governor

1205 Pendleton Street

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 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest funded school district in the state. Ironically, in school district 3, we are the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 not had art or music in our district for over 5 years. On the high school end, there are a few electives. 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. Yet, no cuts have been placed on our athletic programs. New facilities and upgrades have been the focus over the past several years, even in the midst of the economic downturn. Employees took furloughs, but the construction and renovation continued. The acquisition of land continued too.

CSD3 has made cut after cut to try and meet budget yearly. While Districts 1 and 2 enjoy the finest of facilities, I-Pads, marching band, art, music, and drama programs. While CSD3 kids go without ALL of these but enjoy new buses and athletic facilities. Currently they are advertising for the hiring of an athletic director. Where does their money go? The district website is not kept up to date, and the accounting is certainly not detailed as it should be. What has been done with the 1%? They have recently hired a second financial director. How can that be afforded with a district so small?

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. Teachers are some of the lowest in the state and only get paid once a month.

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. Where has that money gone? Plus, there are numerous out of district students who are sliding by year after year without paying the out of district fees. Couldn't this ease the deficient some?

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 needs 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 of CSD3  
MATTER!!!!

Thank you for your time and attention regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

*Concerned Citizen*