

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 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 the millage rate. As compared to the other 2 school districts in Clarendon County, we pay 3-4 times more property taxes in District 3 as citizens in Districts 1 and 2. Yet our school (per child) funding is up to 4 times lower. Assessed funding value per child in CDS3 is approximately \$7,000, in District 2 – \$18,000, and in District 1- \$39,000 per child per year.

We have been without art or music in our school district for over 5 years. These programs would be valuable and beneficial for our children. Numerous studies show that children exposed to art and music in schools both behave better in class and perform better on tests.

CSD3 has made cut after cut to try and meet budget yearly while Districts 1 and 2 enjoy the finest of facilities, Ipads, marching band, art, music and drama programs while District 3 kids go without all of these. Our Girls Softball Team won State Championship 2 years ago and played for the Championship this past year. Yet our Softball fields and sporting facilities are not adequate to support these types of events.

Despite these cuts and our underfunding, we manage to outperform Districts 1 and 2 in test scores and overall performance as well as other areas. With a dedicated faculty and hard work, the children of our school district have been successful. The school district should be reward for their efforts, not penalized.

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. Clarendon School District 3 asked for the language to be changed 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 costs (we have been using our reserves for operations costs) as well as improvements to our school.

We did this in an effort as not to raise or 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 do not seem interested in giving us the ability to use the funds we so desperately need.

I am pleading, as a tax-paying citizen of this County, that you intervene and help us find a solution to our situation here in Clarendon County School District 3.

The children of Clarendon School District 3 matter! We want equal funding for our School District!

Thank you for your time and attention regarding this matter.

Sincerely

April J Benton

Jason Benton