State funding for educational services has failed to keep up with inflation over the past 20 years. To make up for the difference, many school districts have attained voter support for operating levies. However, 25 years ago the state legislature removed seasonal and recreational property from the operating levy tax base that schools must use when asking voters to support an operating referendum at the ballot box. This means that local property taxpayers, i.e. homeowners and main street businesses, must pay more than they would if seasonal properties were left on the local tax base. This has made it much more difficult for schools in central and northern Minnesota, think lakes country, to get voters to say “yes” on an operating referendum. The result is a widening financial disparity between school districts across Minnesota.

Currently, there is a bipartisan bill in the state legislature to help correct these financial inequities for districts that have a high percentage of seasonal and recreational property. SF 1197 (Sen. Grant Hauschild DFL Hermantown) & HF 1161 (Rep. Spencer Igo GOP Grand Rapids) would create a Seasonal & Recreational Tax Base Replacement Aid aimed at helping the residents of lakes country school districts get a fairer shake at passing an operating referendum. The bill doesn’t change how “cabins” are taxed, but the state would assist in lower the cost of the voter approved levy through a formula based on how much seasonal property is in the school district. For the schools in our region that already have voter approved operating levies, this legislation likely means modest property tax relief for you as a residential homestead. The legislation is not contingent on when a voter approved operating levy was or is passed.

Each of us can contact our local state representative and senator and ask them to become co-authors on the bill. Also ask them to support passage of the bill when it comes to a vote. ALL MN children deserve equalized funding rather than funding inequities. Our children are our future. The education we provide in every corner of the state is the best investment we can make. Our children are counting on us, so let's get it done.