

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 96. My name is Tony Huffman; I am superintendent of Washington County JVSD. I would like to make two points. First, consideration of reducing property tax subsidies for K-12 districts based on carryover balances would cause financial chaos in school districts. As public school administrators, we do our best to keep carryover balances to increase financial stability in multi-year forecasting and to address the buildings and grounds needs of our aging facilities without the need to go to voters for additional levy or bond support. Second, the career awareness funds, that have flowed through JVSD's for the past two biennial budgets, is absolutely necessary. As you know, the 2024-2025 school year produced \$10 per student for career awareness. We have approximately 7,000 students in our JVSD attending K-12 public schools, thereby producing approximately \$70,000 in career awareness funds. All seven superintendents in our JVSD agreed on how we would expend these funds. With part of the funding, we partnered with Building Bridges to Careers who agreed to provide a 1 to 1 match to enable the creation of a full-time career awareness coordinator for the entire county. With the remaining funding, we are subsidizing the cost of a unified career awareness platform that will allow our JVSD to hone in on student aptitudes and interests. This will help to ensure students are recruited into the correct CTE pathways and led by counselors and parents into the correct postsecondary endeavor. Chair Brenner and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.