



For Immediate Release

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Regional Special Education Millage on Nov. 8 Ballot

North Ed Seeks Voter Consideration to Maintain Current 2-mill Levy

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. – Northwest Education Services (“North Ed,” formerly *Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District*) will host a public forum next week to provide community members an opportunity to learn more about its regional special education millage proposal in the Nov. 8 election.

The public forum will be held from 4-6 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 18 at Life Skills Center, which is located on the same campus as North Ed’s Career Tech facility at 880 Parsons Road, Traverse City. Life Skills Center serves students ages 18-26 who have a variety of learning impairments.

Voters in the Nov. 8, 2022 election will be asked to consider a 0.5-mill restoration millage for a period of 10 years (2023-32), which would – if approved – allow North Ed to **maintain the existing regional special education levy at its current rate** and offset potential future reductions permitted under the Headlee Amendment. The millage offers financial support to local school districts, which were legally obligated to cover a \$9 million shortfall in unfunded special education costs for the 2020-21 school year. That financial burden for local school districts could increase if the current levy of 2 mills is reduced.

“Currently, North Ed levies 2 mills to support special education services in our region, and it is important to note that taxpayers will not see that levy amount increase beyond the existing rate if this restoration millage proposal is approved on Nov. 8,” said North Ed Superintendent Nick Ceglarek. “It is crucial that voters are informed about the issues before they cast their ballots, and we invite everyone to attend the public forum or visit our website to learn more about how this millage impacts thousands of students and the local schools in our region.”

More information can be found online at www.tinyurl.com/NorthEdMillage.

The restoration millage – if supported by a majority of voters across North Ed’s Intermediate School District (ISD) region – would fund special education services for roughly 3,000 students in all or parts of Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau and Wexford counties. Funding is restricted to special education purposes, and is used to support curriculum and programming needs, facilities maintenance and improvements, classroom equipment purchases, staff wages and professional development.

The local millage is the largest source of funding for special education in the region, with the currently levied 2 mills generating about \$27.5 million in the 2020-21 school year. An additional \$25.6 million is provided through state and federal sources.

Headlee Amendment Impacts

If approved by voters, the restoration millage would only be levied to the extent necessary to restore potential future Headlee reductions and to maintain a level 2-mill special education levy.

Commonly known as “Headlee rollbacks,” existing millage levies can be reduced when property values rise faster than the rate of inflation. The total millage presently available to North Ed for special education is 2.0337 mills, of which 2 mills has historically been collected. If the millage North Ed has available to levy is reduced to below 2 mills due to Headlee rollbacks, there is less money to support special education regionally. For each 0.1 mill the levy is reduced below 2 mills, there is a loss of \$1.39 million in revenue to support special education in the region.

The 2-mill special education millage has been in place since 1986. The ISD last sought a restoration millage of 0.75 mill in 2000, which passed with 56% of voters in support. That restoration millage has been reduced over the past two decades due to Headlee rollbacks.

Funding Shortfall for Special Education

Local school districts in Michigan are required to provide special education students with a free appropriate public education from birth to age 26 – regardless of the cost to the district or a student’s abilities. Funding provided through state and federal sources does not cover the full cost of providing those services. Using revenue raised from the local millage and money drawn from North Ed’s fund balance, the ISD has provided nearly \$28 million since the 2017-18 school year to support local school districts with their unfunded special education costs. Despite the support from ISD local, state, and federal funds, there are still unfunded special education costs that local districts must cover using their general funds.

In the 2020-21 school year (the most recent and complete data set available), local school districts collectively used \$9 million from their general funds to cover the financial gaps in special education funding. That dollar amount could increase if the existing 2-mill special education levy is reduced due to Headlee rollbacks.

If approved, the millage would continue to ease the financial burden associated with special education for local school districts, allowing their general fund dollars to be used on other priorities, as determined by the local district – which could include community facilities, programming and services for all students and other general operating expenditures.

For more information, visit www.tinyurl.com/NorthEdMillage.

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