<u>Madison Local Schools Press Release: May 2021 Operating Levy</u>

At their February 2, 2021 meeting, the Madison Local Schools Board of Education voted unanimously to place a 6.99 mill operating levy on the ballot for the May 4 election. If passed, the levy will generate $2,782,740 annually for the district and cost residents $20.39/month per $100,000 of appraised home value.

This levy is the lowest possible amount necessary for the district to provide essential services and programs, even after implementing significant cost-cutting measures. Without additional funds or reductions, the district will face a negative cash balance starting in the 2021-2022 school year. By law, school districts are not permitted to operate with a negative balance.

The district has been fiscally responsible and aware over the years, reducing expenses regularly since 2009 to ensure taxes remain as low as possible for Madison school district residents. In fact, expenditures this year are actually at the same level that they were in the 2008-2009 school year despite inflation over this period of 24%. District revenues have also declined during this period by a little over $200,000.

While the district will implement additional cuts prior to the levy in May, operations will then be at a point where no further reductions can be made without affecting the essential services and programs Madison students receive. "We have been as efficient as possible, implementing two State Performance audits in the past 8 years to identify all possible savings, as well as seeking opportunities to find additional revenue," explains Superintendent Angela Smith. "We are now at a point where there are no more options for reductions without drastically hurting the education we provide to our students."

Board of Education President Shawn Douglas agrees, stressing, "This is not a spending problem – it's a revenue problem. The Madison Local school district spends less than 87% of all school districts in Ohio. We are conscious of every penny we spend to ensure we get the most value possible out of it. However, our revenue just has not kept pace with inflation – in fact, we have lost revenue over the years."

Despite the fiscal challenges the district has faced for decades, Douglas says they have worked hard to support all students: "Our students' success is of utmost importance to everyone at the district, and this levy is key to ensuring we are able to continue helping them achieve their individual career pathways and reach their unique goals."

Coronavirus has not helped the district's financial outlook, as stimulus funds did not cover the additional expense incurred to keep students and staff safe in school and to provide online education options for students who cannot be in the classroom. "COVID has resulted in many, many challenges," Smith continues, "not the least of which was to cut our revenue from the state. While we received about $350,000 in stimulus funds to help offset costs due to COVID, these funds did not even cover the over $500,000 we lost in the first place, much less fund the additional expenses we had to cover."

Due to the structure of Ohio's state funding, money school districts receive from their communities does not increase with inflation. For example, $1 million received in 2009 is still $1 million today, despite the fact that costs continued to increase due to inflation of 24% during this time. Because of this, school districts must return to the taxpayers for additional funding that serves as "inflationary adjustments."

Ohio school districts on average return to their taxpayers every three years for new funds. The last time the Madison school district asked for more operating money was four years ago, in 2017, and before that, a new operating levy had not been passed for 28 years, since 1989.

More information can be found on the district's website, www.madisonschools.net, under Levy Information in Quick Links.

Summary of Levy:
Amount: 6.99 mills
Generates: $2,782,740
Cost to taxpayers: $20.39/month per $100,000 of appraised home value
Voting day: May 4, 2021