



Utah State Board of Education,

We are writing to address a funding concern that came up shortly after the legislative session ended. We first want to express our gratitude for your support of rural schools during the legislative session and beyond. We have a unified goal to provide an adequate education to every Utah student regardless of their zip code. We appreciate your advocacy for rural public schools that serve as the great equalizer for our future leaders.

In 2020, after the start of the pandemic, the state legislature called a special session to readdress the state budget. At that time, the funding line item known as "Administrative Costs" was merged with the NESS program, restructured, and reduced. The reduction in on-going funding was made up with one-time funding. A study of rural school funding had already been contracted to WestEd, and there was a belief that the legislature could float this line item's funding with one-time funding until the study's recommendations were implemented.

In the 2024 legislative session, Representative Karen Peterson sponsored HB533 that was intended to replace the NESS formula and remove the need for this one-time bridge funding. Though HB533 was a high priority, it was cut in the last week of the session. When this bill was removed from the budget, the one-time bridge funding was not added back in. We request that this one-time funding be reinstated until the NESS formula is replaced. The WestEd study validates the need for this funding. The total cost of this request is \$3,236,512.

The Utah school district superintendents and business administrators are committed to working with Representative Peterson, the USBE staff, and other agencies to ensure an improved revision of HB533 for the next legislative session. We thank you for your time and hope you can support us in bridging the gap for this important funding item.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dale Lamborn", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Dale Lamborn
President Utah Rural Schools Association
435-881-7795