**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*STATEMENT\*\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

Fellow Board Members, Interim Superintendent, District Staff, and all residents of the Sartell- St. Stephen ISD748 School District:

Since February, there have been one on one meetings with the Interim Superintendent, two closed meetings, and multiple requests from board members for the Sartell-St. Stephen School Board Chair and Interim Superintendent to separate twenty-one individual administrative contracts for independent consideration as opposed to blanket approval as a single action item. This procedure is reasonable, transparent, and practiced in other districts throughout the state of Minnesota. As of June 17th, 2024 the request to separate has failed four times. It is in the best interest of the district for these contracts to be settled with urgency through a process that allows for vested board oversight.

The Interim Superintendent made a statement to WJON on June 18th, 2024 in which he referenced a special board meeting to be held June 25, 2024. With no communication prior from School Board Chair Meling announcing an official call for a special meeting, or any inquiry on availability for such- it was evident there had been a stark departure from past practice. Previously, special meeting dates and times have been determined through internal board communication and collaboration. June 25, 2024 is not, and has never been, a date available for the entire board to meet. In addition, the Interim Superintendent does not have the authority to call a special meeting of the school board. When we read the Interim Superintendent’s comments in the WJON article, scheduling conflicts were immediately raised and subsequently, alternative dates and times were suggested. There are emails which illustrate this communication. We encourage all who would like to inquire to submit data requests for these documents.

Additionally, the internal board communication regarding schedule conflicts was evidently leaked to a community member as the information was not known outside of the School Board Chair and the Interim Superintendent. In a social media post, the community member claimed to have knowledge that we were “planning to not attend the special board meeting on June 25”. This inaccurate depiction of on-going board conversation has led to further breakdown of trust amongst the board and the Interim superintendent as we work through this urgent issue. It has made finding resolution to this impasse more challenging.

Minnesota State Statute confirms, “The board must have the general charge of the business of the district, the school houses, and of the interests of the schools thereof. The board's authority to govern, manage, and control the district; to carry out its duties and responsibilities; and to conduct the business of the district includes implied powers in addition to any specific powers granted by the legislature.” (Minnesota Statute 123B.02, sub. 1). The role of the Superintendent or Interim Superintendent is to bring recommendations of day-to-day operations to the school board for approval, however, final authority is vested in the school board, which is elected by the residents of the district.

We call on School Board Chair Meling to cancel the June 25, 2024 meeting as it has been known to her and the Interim Superintendent since Tuesday, June 18, 2024 that not all board members would be available. We are requesting that Chair Meling promptly prioritize aligning schedules so an official call for a Special Meeting or an Emergency Meeting by the Chair can be made for a date next week when all board members are available to attend. Ensuring that all 6 members can be present when votes will be taken should be a paramount concern to anybody committed to upholding the integrity of a governing body.

We remain committed to bringing solutions to this impasse. We greatly appreciate the hard work of district staff and we are resolute in our commitment to settle these contracts promptly while assuring our district remains accountable through its elected School Board.

With Gratitude,

Emily Larson Jen Smith Scott Wenshau

