

Residential Opportunities, Inc.

1100 South Rose St

Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Phone: (269) 343-3731

Web: Residentialopportunities.org

Kalamazoo Public Schools

Every child, every opportunity, every time!

April 2015

Dear Residential Opportunities, Inc. (ROI) Partner and Friend:

Tuesday, May 5 is an important day in Kalamazoo County. On that day, there are two voter questions on the ballot: the state roads referendum and **the local (KRESA) special education millage**. While it is likely that you have heard a considerable amount about the roads referendum, you may not know as much about the special education millage. The special education system helps many children and young adults who also receive assistance from ROI and it is because of the needs of these people that, together, we are reaching out to you.

Please take a moment to familiarize yourself with **the local (KRESA) special education millage**, and then share information as you see fit.

Special education services in the county are substantially underfunded, which creates a great deal of pressure on the general education budgets of local school districts. At one time, all special education services were funded through dedicated special education sources. However, these sources have not kept up with special education needs. Since special education services are required through federal and state laws, local Kalamazoo County school districts have had to fund these partially unfunded costs out of their limited operating budgets. In fact, districts across Kalamazoo County are now funding approximately \$11 million of special education costs annually from their operating budgets, which reduces programming for general education students.

For many years, the state has underfunded public education, and local school districts have needed to make significant budget cuts as a result. Districts across the county have cut in excess of \$20 million over the last five years, and districts across the state have cut amounts more or less proportionate to their sizes. The Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) have cut approximately \$10 million during this period. The requirement of local school districts to spend more of their operating budgets for special education services has created the need for even greater cuts to general education programming. If approved, this millage will be used by the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA) to substantially or fully reimburse school districts for the existing shortage in special education funding.

Thank you for your attention to **the local (KRESA) special education millage**. Please remember to vote on May 5. Local dollars for local schools.

Sincerely,



Scott Schrum, Chief Executive Officer
Residential Opportunities, Inc.



Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., Superintendent
Kalamazoo Public Schools