

Title: Rural Voices Rise in Defense of Public Education at Wright County Meeting

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Rural Voices Rise in Defense of Public Education at Wright County Meeting

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April 22, 2025 - At the most recent meeting for the Wright County Democrats, which The Wright County Monitor was invited to attend, one voice resonated with a sort of urgency: Nancy Huisinga, a former Iowa House candidate and an advocate with Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI). Speaking to a predominantly older audience of 16, Huisinga introduced the group to "Public School Strong," a grassroots campaign led by Iowa CCI. This initiative is aimed at defending and improving Iowa's 300-plus public school districts, which Huisinga argues are being undermined by state legislation and private interests.

"We want fully funded public education," Huisinga stated plainly, considering 5% funding to be "fully funded". "We (Iowa Public School Strong) are inviting Iowans to engage with their school boards—not to fight them, but to support

and strengthen them."

She shared a picture of the challenges public schools face: state-level "defunding," increased relocation of taxpayer dollars to private schools, and political maneuvers that Huisinga said "erode the democratic foundation of education." Notably, she criticized the state's voucher program, which has redirected funds to private schools that are mostly religious and lack the accountability required of public schools. She also highlighted the greater concern of private schools' selective admission practices, which she shared with the crowd, undermine the universal access that public schools offer.

However, one of the most notable parts of her presentation was her memory of attending the Des Moines school board meetings, where community presence in "Public School Strong" T-shirts brought gratitude, not confrontation, from the elected leaders. She encouraged others in

the room to adopt civic responsibility, even if they do not have school-aged children in their personal lives.

In addition to rallying support, Huisinga offered practical steps for involvement and solutions to the crowd. Education material was distributed, and the group discussed resolutions to eliminate vouchers within five years.

The tone of her message was not just one of resistance, but of hopeful mobilization. "If we don't do this," she warned, "we risk losing the very heart of our communities—our schools."

The meeting, which also touched on social media outreach and protest planning, stood in great contrast to the small, rural setting and attendance.

In the face of education and property tax policies that risk leaving small communities behind, it may be the quiet voices in the corners of rural rooms that rise up to shape Iowa's future.