**Letters from Parents, band supporters, band alumni and musicians**

*This is a sample letter that can be sent to the Minister of Education and to their Opposition Critics which emphasizes the importance of band programming in the province. During COVID programs decreased by approximately 40%, elementary Jazz programs remained on hold for most areas of the province even through the 2021-22 school year. Schools are stretched to the limit and are having to make difficult choices. More funding must be provided to support school divisions and programs as we rebuild from band program restrictions and cancellations.*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

Music is a fundamental element in the education of students worldwide. The unique value of ensemble music making found in band programs is well documented and beneficial to our youth and our society. Band has been proven to help reduce stress and improve academic performance, while also developing discipline and perseverance. These are critical benefits at all times, but they are particularly valuable as our society recovers from the pandemic.

COVID-19 should not be allowed to continue to rob our children and our communities of the benefits of band! **Extra distancing requirements, gathering restrictions and student cohorting all had an outsized impact on Band programs**. Now, as programs work hard to recover, School Division funding limitations are putting Band and other programs at risk. Programs like band, adversely impacted by the pandemic, must be provided the time and support needed to rebound.

I call upon the {MINISTER OF EDUCATION/ GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN} to **increase education funding to ensure our students have access to diverse learning opportunities**. School Divisions should not establish minimum registration or participation numbers on programs that were specifically impacted by the pandemic. To do so would be unfair and short-sighted with potential long-term impacts to students and our province.

Our goal must be to return to full ensemble playing and performing at all school levels and in all band programs. Only once band music is again a regular, strong and vibrant part of our education system can School Divisions effectively determine the impact of program adjustments and cancellations.

Regards,