

Rep. Josh Tanner
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COMMITTEES

House Appropriations

House Resources & Conservation

Idaho State Legislature

State Capitol
P.O. Box 83720
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February 3, 2026

Superintendent Debbie Chritchfield

Idaho State Department of Education
650 W. State Street
Boise, ID 83702

RE: FY 2026–FY 2027 Public Schools Budget — Need for a Sustainable Plan and Administrative Tradeoffs

Superintendent Critchfield,

Thank you for your letter to Mr. Bybee on behalf of the JFAC Co-Chairs regarding the FY 2026 and FY 2027 public schools budget. We appreciate the revisions made after revenue projections were lowered.

JFAC must balance the entire state budget—public safety, corrections, health and welfare, courts, water, transportation, and more. Other agencies are living within tighter revenues by providing prioritized operating plans: what is essential, what can be delayed, redesigned, or eliminated. That is what Idaho households and businesses do when revenues tighten.

Your letter argues that further reductions are unacceptable, but it does not provide that kind of plan. “No further cuts” is not a plan—it’s a position.

Before JFAC can responsibly consider additional funding, the Department must provide a clear, accountable roadmap that includes:

1. Prioritized budget plan (with dollars attached)
 - Ranked must-fund / should-fund / nice-to-have items with dollar amounts.
 - Specific reductions, pauses, consolidations, or redesigns in programs, grants, contracts, and administration.
2. Sustainability and efficiency plan
 - Steps to reduce overhead and duplicative spending.
 - Contract/procurement review with expected savings (rebid, consolidate, renegotiate, eliminate).
 - Staffing comparison (FY 2024 actuals to FY 2027 request), vacancy rates, and justification for any growth.

3. Outcome accountability

- Metrics, timelines, and what spending changes if outcomes do not improve.

Alternative expectation: start at the top. If classroom impacts should be minimized, submit a revised proposal that takes additional reductions from the Superintendent's Office and central administration first—operating expenses, hiring/backfills, communications/outreach duplication, and discretionary professional services—before seeking restored dollars while other agencies absorb cuts.

Please provide these items in writing prior to your next budget setting hearing and be prepared to walk through priorities and tradeoffs line-by-line.

Respectfully,

Representative Josh Tanner

Co-Chair, Joint Finance – Appropriations Committee

District 14

Idaho House of Representatives