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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Highland Staff Agree to Pay Higher Healthcare Costs**

MEDINA, OHIO (4/18/11) – The Highland Board of Education reached an agreement with the Highland Education Association to increase the employee share of health insurance premiums. The agreement was reached at the April 18 regular Board of Education meeting. Teachers will pay 15% of their premiums (up from 5%) beginning July 2011 and 20% beginning July 2012. Administrators and exempt employees have also agreed to the same increase. This move will save the Highland Schools approximately \$1 million over the two-year period.

Highland Board president Dan Petek stated, "The Highland teachers have really come together to help the District's financial situation. This is an unprecedented step and what they are offering not only meets but exceeds what is included in Senate Bill 5."

"We know that times are tough for everyone. Our teachers agreed to bring forth this proposal to show that we are all working together to stretch every tax dollar for the benefit of our students," stated Mary Becker, President, Highland Education Association.

"While we don't know what the final outcome of SB5 will be, we do know that we have two solid years of direct economic benefit to the District [approximately \$1 million] as a result of these concessions. The community has asked for the teachers to step up and give something, to demonstrate a shared sacrifice during these difficult economic times, and the teachers have delivered," noted Superintendent Catherine Aukerman.

The District has already made \$4 million in cuts, including laying off 40 staff members, freezing administrators' pay for two years and previous changes to the health insurance plan. Highland Schools already have the lowest cost per pupil in Medina County and spend 20% less than the State average.

"The levy on the May 3<sup>rd</sup> ballot is still an absolute necessity and the need is compounded by recently announced State budget cuts that equal \$1.5 million in FY 12 and \$1.7 million in FY 13 for Highland Schools," stressed Mr. Petek. The proposed 6.9 mill emergency operating levy will produce \$4.6 million annually and help fund day-to-day operations of the District, including classroom education, programs, textbooks, technology and utilities.

It has been 12 years since voters have increased operating revenue through the passage of a new levy.