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For immediate release

The Baldwin County School District Seeks Public Input on the Impact of HB 581

(Milledgeville, GA) - The Baldwin County Board of Education is seeking community input as it considers opting out of Georgia House Bill 581, a new law set to take effect on January 1, 2025. HB 581 introduces a statewide homestead exemption that caps the annual increase in property values for tax purposes, limiting growth based on the previous year's inflation rate.

House Bill 581 addresses property tax assessments for homeowners who have qualified for homestead exemption. This bill affects funding to local municipalities and county governments, including local school districts. While this exemption may reduce tax obligations for homeowners, it could result in decreased revenue for local school districts and county governments. To offset these funding reductions, governing bodies may need to increase millage rates or other taxes and fees, or reduce critical services.

House Bill 581 allows local governments to have a one-time opportunity to opt out. The Baldwin County Board of Education will hold three hearings to discuss the impacts that it could have on the school district's budget. While the measure provides property tax relief for homeowners, it may significantly impact public school funding, which relies heavily on local property taxes. The Baldwin County Board of Education is concerned that the cap could reduce revenue, making it more challenging to maintain current programs and resources for students.

Examples of potential impacts include limited funding for instructional materials and technology upgrades; budget cuts to programs such as athletics, fine arts, and after school; reduced availability of counseling, mental health programs, and interventions for struggling learners; larger class sizes due to staffing constraints; and delays in essential school repairs and bus replacements.

All Baldwin County citizens are invited to share their thoughts at the public hearings scheduled for Tuesday, January 21, 2025, at 6:00 P.M.; Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 6:00 P.M.; and Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 6:00 P.M.

All public hearings will be held at the Baldwin County Board of Education, 110 N. ABC Street, Milledgeville, GA 31061.

It is important to note that should the board decide to opt-out of HB 581, the decision will not affect any existing exemptions for Baldwin County residents. The Board of Education encourages all Baldwin County residents to participate in these critical discussions to help shape the future of public education in our community.

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