



School Administrators Alliance

Representing the Interests of Wisconsin School Children

State Budget Alert May 4, 2017

The Joint Finance Committee (JFC) wrapped up its 6 state budget hearings on April 21st and started voting on state budget items in executive session on Monday, May 1st. At this point, we do not know when the JFC plans to take up K-12 budget issues. We also do not know if (and when) the Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) will issue new revenue estimates for the 2017-19 biennium.

SAA members have done an absolutely outstanding job up to now in our state budget advocacy efforts with letters/phone calls to legislators, legislative forums, and the strong showing we had at the JFC budget hearings. More than 75 SAA members testified at these budget hearings – our strongest showing ever. The feedback I have received inside the Capitol, in addition to public comments in the news, indicate that our advocacy efforts are having an impact on this budget process.

Yes, we have done a great job up until now, and many legislators are expressing their support for the governor's school funding proposals, particularly the proposed increases in per pupil categorical aid. But, if we are silent in the next 3-4 weeks of the budget deliberations, legislative support for K-12 funding could deteriorate significantly.

Governor Walker has signaled a willingness to fund transportation needs from general purpose revenues – the same source that funds school aid. Assembly leaders have introduced a tax/transportation funding plan that, if adopted, could diminish available funds for public schools. And we already know some legislators don't support a significant increase for schools.

So, I implore you to act again on behalf of the children you serve. I urge every SAA member to contact the 16 members of the [Joint Finance Committee](#), as well as your own legislators, in support of the SAA's State Budget positions as soon as possible.

I know many of you have already discussed these issues with your legislators and I thank you. I also ask that you contact them again. For your convenience, I have provided links to the [Senate Directory](#), the [Assembly Directory](#) and [Find My Legislators](#). Please copy any of your written communications to the SAA.

In your communications, please cover the following:

1. Express our strong support for the governor's proposal to increase each district's per pupil categorical aid from the current \$250 per pupil by adding \$200 per pupil in 2017-18 and an additional \$204 in 2018-19. Explain the importance of these increases in per pupil revenues in both fiscal and human terms. In particular, emphasize the impact on educational opportunities for the kids you serve.

2. Express our strong opposition to the budget provision which makes a district's receipt of the new per pupil aid contingent upon the district certifying to DPI that district employees pay at least 12% of all costs and payments associated with employee health care plans in that school year. Clearly, this provision interferes with district efforts to recruit and retain qualified staff. It also diminishes the innovative ways districts have used the flexibility afforded under Act 10 to reduce costs and operate more efficiently. Share with your legislators the steps you have taken under Act 10, and urge them to support removing this provision from the budget bill. See the [SAA testimony](#) before the JFC on this issue.
3. Express our strong opposition to the budget provision requiring districts to distribute new per pupil aid equitably to each school in the district based on enrollment. Assembly Speaker Vos has recognized that this provision is "irrelevant" because each district could easily work around it making this provision a meaningless paper exercise.
4. Express our strong support for the governor's proposed increases in sparsity aid and high-cost transportation.
5. Express our strong support for the governor's school mental health initiatives.
6. Express our strong support for increasing the low revenue ceiling from the current \$9,100 per pupil to \$9,500 in 2017-18, and \$9,900 in 2018-19.
7. Express our strong support for increasing state categorical aid funding for high cost special education to fully reimburse districts for costs exceeding \$30,000 for any individual student.

Make no mistake about it. We have to continue fighting for the governor's proposed aid increases for public school children. With the end of the school year approaching, I know you are busy. But, I need you to carry the fight a bit longer. It is vitally important for legislators to know we are still watching at this point in the budget process.

So, let's stand up and fight for the governor's proposed school aid increases.

Thanks for listening, and for all your efforts on behalf of Wisconsin school children.