

HURLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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To: Local Media
Fr: Chris Patritto
Re: Wisconsin Education Budget

The Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee has come out with their initial proposals for funding our Wisconsin schools. This budget proposal clearly underfunds Wisconsin public schools. Once again, this budget will force school districts to reduce educational opportunities for the children we serve.

Although, the JFC has voted to restore Governor Walker's proposed \$127 million (\$150 per pupil) cut in the first year of the biennium, this only results in a first year freeze for public schools. We will see no increase during the first year. The second year of the biennium will see schools getting an added \$100 per pupil increase in categorical aid. This increase is far less than any needed inflationary increase needed to provide services to our students.

For the first time ever, there will be no increase in the state imposed revenue limits over the next two years. This increase over the years has varied between \$200 and \$50 per pupil. In the next two years we will see a \$0 per pupil increase.

On the flipside, per pupil payments for Independent Charter and private voucher schools will increase each year- \$12 per pupil in the first year and an additional \$108 the second year.

For the first time ever, Wisconsin is expected to fall below the national average in per pupil spending. The JFC action makes that a certainty. This is a very sobering statistic as Wisconsin's proud educational history of being a leader in funding and providing for its public schools.

The JFC's vote to expand private school vouchers and deduct aid from public schools to pay for it is projected to reduce the available general aid to public schools by an estimated \$48 million over the biennium. As funds get pulled away from the public schools, so do opportunities and staff. The State of Wisconsin will be attempting to fund two separate school systems with the same, diminishing pool of money. This will be very difficult to do, as funding one system has been a challenge.

The new teacher licensure proposal eliminates many standards for licensing teachers – no bachelor's degree would be needed to teach our students in many subject areas. This is concerning as Wisconsin has built one of the strongest educational systems in our nation. This change leaves Wisconsin as having among the lowest entry standards for the teaching profession in the country.

The JFC also has proposed that a district cannot grant a diploma to an individual unless they successfully pass a civics assessment. This is in addition to the multitude of other tests our students are required to take.

The School Report Card scores in Wisconsin would go from a number score to a system based on star rating system. Does this do justice as a system of ranking schools or does it send us into the same system as ranking a hotel.

Under another proposal from the JFC, home-schooled students and virtual school students would be allowed to participate in any extra-curricular or athletic team our school district offers. This proposal raises

many questions about differing eligibility requirements for members of the same team. The WIAA has come out strongly against this proposal.

Ultimately, these proposals seem to be based on ideology and not about evidence or proven best practices in education. What does the evidence say about what will improve student achievement? What practices are out there that is proven to close achievement gaps? Wisconsin has always been a leader in education. The JFC proposals go further to take us out of the educational leadership role in our country.

Please take some time to research the latest educational proposals from the JFC. If you feel they lead Wisconsin education in the wrong direction, contact your legislators and share your concerns. We need our elected officials to know that we need Wisconsin to stay as a leader in education.

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