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Good morning/afternoon, my name is Claudia Henrickson and I stand here before you as the proud Executive Director of Student Services for the Green Bay Area Public Schools. I am here to not only represent the best interests of students with disabilities, but for all students in our public schools.

Green Bay has 3,143 students identified with disabilities, which represents 15.3% of our total student population. In the past three years we have seen a small but steady decrease in the total number of students with disabilities. Despite the decrease in student population, we have shifted an additional \$6 million from our general funds to address increasing costs. With the additional funds we have lowered caseloads, increased para-professional support and increased support services and professional development opportunities for all staff. Even with all of the added supports, our staff are still overwhelmed because the needs are so much greater.

The special education costs per pupil, not offset by federal aids, is 14.24% of our District's revenue limits per pupil. State aid has remained the same since 2008 and reimbursement rates have fallen from its peak in 1980 to a mere 24% in 2018-19. **In order to cover this huge gap, resources intended for all students have had to be diverted to cover this gap in resources.**

In addition to those already decreasing revenues, we are now supporting two (2) separate school systems in Green Bay. Since 2015-16 with the creation of the Special Needs Scholarship (SNS) Program, state aid is now being diverted to private school students where they are not required to follow a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) or have a licensed IEP teacher on staff.

In most cases in Green Bay, the students receiving the scholarships have never attended our public schools. Because a student has to have a current IEP or a Service Plan in place to receive the scholarship, the District has had double the requests for initial evaluations and reevaluations, which must be completed by the public school district, at no cost to the family or private school. We currently have a 45% placement rate from private school referrals, in other words less than half of those students referred are qualifying for special education services. What many of you may not be aware of, is that the public schools must still provide what is called Equitable Services to private schools. This means that a designated portion of our IDEA monies must be spent to provide special education services to private school students who have disabilities. This is in addition to the dollars being diverted through the scholarships.

In closing, please remember that public schools serve the students most charter schools and private schools cannot or will not. We don't turn students or families away. We embrace ALL, with far more accountability than any private or charter school must provide. We need you to support Governor Evers' budget proposal.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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