

Rep. Pope: Pro-voucher groups distort truth about school funding

Posted on Tuesday, Mar 21, 2017

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MADISON, Wis. – Yesterday, Senate and Assembly Democrats released a [memo](#) produced by the non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB), which illustrated that voucher operators will receive at least \$1,000 more per student than public school students. In response to the release, School Choice Wisconsin (SCW), Wisconsin Federation for Children (WFC) and Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty (WILL) claimed that Democratic legislators were misleading when highlighting the funding inequities between public school students and voucher students. SCW, WFC and WILL then attempted to distort the truth on how much money voucher operators actually receive.

“It is no surprise to me that these groups would attempt to spin the facts as they have,” said Rep. Pope. “In this new age of surging school privatization, led by U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, anyone who gains from for-profit schools will say whatever they need to, to defend the taxpayer dollar drain to the public.”

In their response, the pro-voucher groups claim that state aid is the only funding stream they have access to. This is simply not true. One aspect of funding that these groups failed to or willingly didn't acknowledge are the many public state and federal aids that these voucher programs have access to. On the state level, these include the State School Lunch Aid, the School Breakfast Program and the School Day Milk Program. In addition, private schools are entitled to receive Transportation services and Title I services, which are provided by public school districts. The six largest voucher schools in the state alone received more than \$7 million in

additional state and federal aids. When divided by their 6,486 pupils this amounts approximately \$1,087 more per pupil.

Furthermore, the SCW, WFC and WILL release claims that *“categorical and federal aids will put an additional \$2,000 per student into traditional public schools.”* Again, this is not true. The LFB included categorical aids in their analysis and federal aid was not addressed for either public or voucher schools.

Perhaps for the sake of consistency, their release ends with another falsehood, claiming *“The increase for the voucher amount is tied directly to the overall increase in public education spending.”* Comparing net aid per-pupil to a voucher payment in 2010-11 vs 2018-19 illustrates a disturbing trend. In 2010-11 the net aid per-pupil was \$6,080 compared to the voucher payment of \$6,442 for a difference of \$362. Under the governor’s budget in 2018-19 the net aid per pupil would be \$6,703 compared to the estimated voucher payment of \$8,080 (average between K-8 & 9-12) would be a difference of \$1,377. Should the governor’s budget pass as is, it would mean that over the span of 8 years, the gap between aid spent on a public school student and voucher payments will have risen \$1,015 per student.

“This trend of prioritizing voucher schools over public schools in this inequitable fashion must stop,” said Rep. Pope. “If we are to continue Wisconsin’s proud tradition of high-quality, high-performing public schools, we must reinvest in them and discontinue these entitlements for the wealthy at the expense of our community public schools.”