

Rep. Taylor: Slams Walker for pitting school kids against educators

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Increases in per pupil funding dependent on slashing educator compensation for some districts

MADISON – After his failed Presidential bid just a year and a half ago, it appears as though Governor Scott Walker is using his divide and conquer tactics to once again revive his role in the conservative spotlight. Yesterday, in his fourth budget address, he proposes expanding certain provisions of Act 10, forcing school districts across Wisconsin to comply or lose their funding. Current law requires units of local government to force employees to pay a minimum of 12 percent for their health care premiums if they are offering a health plan through the Group Insurance Board. Under Walker's provision, school districts would now be forced to comply with this mandate regardless of whether or not they provide health care through the state health plan.

"Pitting our children against our educators is disgusting enough, but then blackmailing districts to comply with his new mandate or lose the new funding they desperately need is sickening. In the face of a severe teaching shortage, which Walker has only contributed to over the years, his obsession with punishing public sector employees is punitive, vindictive and only compounds the problem. The big losers once again are our children," Taylor said.

Madison Metropolitan School District is currently compliant with Act 10 and successfully negotiated with both their local HMOs and educational staff to control health care costs. They are at risk of losing \$11 million under Walker's proposal. Madison is not the only district affected. Districts in Beloit, Janesville, Oconomowoc

just to name a few, will also be impacted by this mandate.

After suffering over \$1 billion in funding cuts over the first six years of Walker's tenure, school spending on teacher salaries and other school staff has fallen faster than the national average. Wisconsin has already experienced the biggest decline of any state in spending on employee benefits. As a result, Wisconsin is experiencing an acute teacher shortage. 54 percent of districts are experiencing a teacher shortage in math and 50 percent are experiencing a shortage in science (Wisconsin Budget Project: Budget Cuts and Teacher Shortages 1/11/2017).

Teacher quality is one of the most important school-based determinants of student success.

"To hold our kids ransom to score political points is the lowest of the low. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to stand up for our children and say no to these bullying tactics that are intended to hurt our 870,000 public school kids and make Wisconsin's teacher shortage worse," Taylor concluded.