

Sens. Bewley, Erpenbach, Reps. Pope, Hintz: Property taxpayer costs triple under GOP voucher plan

Posted on Tuesday, Jul 25, 2017

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Contact:

Sen. Janet Bewley, Senate Education Committee
[608-266-3510](tel:608-266-3510)

Sen. Jon Erpenbach, Joint Committee on Finance
[608-266-6670](tel:608-266-6670)

Rep. Sondy Pope, Assembly Education Committee
[608-266-3520](tel:608-266-3520)

Rep. Gordon Hintz, Joint Committee on Finance
[608-266-2254](tel:608-266-2254)

Budget proposal sticks local taxpayers with the tab for expanded program

MADISON – The latest Republican budget proposal would nearly triple local property taxpayer costs for the statewide school voucher program, four legislative Democrats announced today. New figures from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau show that local costs for the state-mandated voucher program will balloon to \$120.3 million, up from \$43.1 million in one budget alone.

“The last state budget shifted the costs of the unaccountable voucher program onto local taxpayers,” Rep. Sondy Pope (D-Mt. Horeb) said. “This budget triples the cost of that mandate with no opportunity for local taxpayers to weigh in.”

The Democrats noted taxpayers have no local oversight of voucher spending that takes state aid out of their districts — at a much higher rate per student — leaving property taxpayers to make up the difference if it's made up at all. The Fiscal Bureau memo showed that payouts to voucher operators would exceed all state aid per student by \$1000-\$1700 per student after diversions to the voucher and charter programs are factored in.

“Local property taxpayers should see more of their state tax dollars come home to schools that have been at the heart of rural and northern communities for generations,” said Sen. Janet Bewley (D-Delta). “At the very least they should have a say before their hard-earned tax dollars are shifted to unaccountable voucher schools at a higher rate and with no taxpayer oversight.”

Legislative Democrats introduced legislation this spring to give local taxpayers a say before voucher costs are shifted onto property taxpayers by requiring a local referendum. That plan was also included in the education package put forward by Democratic members of the Joint Finance Committee ahead of the state's budget deadline.

“If my Republican colleagues want to mandate this program in district after district, they should either pay for it or give property taxpayers a say before sticking them with the bill,” said Rep. Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh).

The memo shows that 83% of the statewide choice program will be shifted onto local taxpayers (“Aid Reduction”) while the state's share will fall from 45% to 17% in one budget alone (“Net GPR”).

“The Republican plan to force property taxpayers to foot the bill for voucher schools and their lobbyists is just wrong. Taxpayers deserve to know that the Republican Legislature is spending their school money with no local accountability. What Happened to local control and accountability for local school spending?” asked Sen. Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton).

[See the LFB memo.](#)