

Sen. Schachtner: Property taxpayers on the hook for 62 percent increase for vouchers

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Legislation would have given local voters a say

(MADISON) – The cost to property taxpayers of the statewide and Racine voucher programs will increase by 62 percent in one year alone, according to data released from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

For students entering the programs in 2015 or later, the statewide and Racine voucher school programs are funded entirely by aid taken out of local school districts, which ends up on property tax bills. The figures show that the 2018-19 costs will rise to \$68 million statewide – up from \$42 million the year before.

“At a time when voters are being asked to vote over and over on referenda to meet basic needs, we should not be adding the cost of special interest voucher schools to property tax bills without local oversight,” said Senator Patty Schachtner (D – Somerset).

Last session, Senate Democrats introduced [Senate Bill 227](#), later incorporated into the Democratic state budget amendment proposal that would have given local voters a say before the costs of these programs are added to their property tax bills.

“My Democratic colleagues’ legislation would not have prevented anyone from

attending a voucher school, but it would have given voters the same say we give them on other school costs,” Senator Schachtner said. “If voucher school operators can make their case to local voters, the costs would come from local budgets, and if not, the state politicians who enacted this mandate would have to fund it.”

During the state budget process, Democratic members of the budget-writing committee offered a [proposal](#) that would have decreased property taxes by \$25 million while restoring funding cuts made to local schools. The proposal would have saved more in [property taxes](#) than the budget that passed last fall.