

Survival Coalition: Concerned safety plan lacks supports and services for students

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Madison, WI- While the Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations supports efforts to make Wisconsin schools safer for all children, disability advocates remain concerned that recent proposals miss the mark when it comes to the needs of students with disabilities. Specifically, Survival Coalition members say Governor Walker's proposed \$100 million investment in school safety does not go far enough to provide the necessary supports and services students require.

"Students with disabilities are more likely to be bullied, they are more likely to have unmet mental health needs. They are increasingly taught by the least experienced teachers. Yet there hasn't been an increase in special education funding for almost ten years. Costs to educate students with disabilities have increased over time while the reimbursement rate has gone from a high of 66% in 1980 to a low of 26% in 2017." said Lisa Pugh, Co-Chair of Survival Coalition.

Survival Coalition launched a survey during the month of January to get input from families on the quality of special education services in Wisconsin. The results show that lack of resources is affecting children's education and social-emotional well-being.

Survival Co-chair Beth Swedeen said, "Over 500 families responded to the survey

and many say they have seen declining supports over time. 42% said that their child struggles with more behavioral challenges, and 47% said their child was increasingly socially isolated due to lack of services.”

Research shows that when police presence in schools is increased, the suspension, expulsion of students with disabilities also rises.

“Funds redirected to school mental health services, more school counselors and psychologists would benefit all students and keep them in the classroom and learning,” says Pugh. “The legislature should consider engaging stakeholders including parents before rushing into solutions that don’t provide greater support to students in our schools across Wisconsin,” says Swedeen.