

# Rep. Kitchens: Disappointed with school aid veto

Posted on Friday, Jul 12, 2019

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MADISON, Wis. – Rep. Joel Kitchens, R-Sturgeon Bay, is generally pleased with the education portion of the budget recently signed by Gov. Tony Evers, but he is still frustrated with the governor’s decision to veto a provision that would have ensured a minimum level of state aid to all school districts.

“Overall, I think this is a good education budget that moves us in the right direction and I’m glad the governor decided to incorporate many of the final recommendations that came from the Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding, of which I was the co-chair,” Kitchens said. “One area that I’m very disappointed in, however, is the governor’s decision to veto the minimum aid provision. It’s something that we’ve been championing for a long time and I thought we were finally going to get it done.”

When Gov. Evers was superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction, he acknowledged in his “Fair Funding for Our Future” proposal that the state should be providing a minimum level of school aid for every public school student, regardless of the school they attend or where they live.

“I’m at a complete loss for why the governor made this veto,” Kitchens said. “I just don’t understand it.”

The 2019-21 budget passed by the Wisconsin Legislature would have provided at least \$1,000 in state aid per pupil to every public school district in Wisconsin through a new categorical aid program. Kitchens says that would have greatly benefited school districts like the ones in Washington Island, Gibraltar and Sevastopol.

Because of the current funding formula, higher property value districts get less state aid than lower property value districts, which puts more of a burden on local taxpayers and can lead to cuts to courses and staff. Kitchens says that just because a district may have high property values, that doesn't necessarily mean everyone who lives there is wealthy.

Under the governor's veto, school districts like Washington Island, Gibraltar and Sevastopol will be losing almost \$300 per student in state aid compared to the budget passed by the state Legislature.