

Rep. Pope: Republicans ignore public demand for special ed funding

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MADISON, Wis. – Recently, Republican leadership and the co-chairs of the Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding (BRCSF) declared they will not support Governor Evers’ plan to increase special education funding. Throughout both the Governor’s budget listening sessions and the public hearings for the BRCSF, education advocates and the public made it clear that special education funding is a priority that would put desperately needed resources directly into schools to adequately serve kids with special needs.

“It’s extremely disappointing to see the lack of commitment from the GOP to work together with the governor on what should be a non-partisan issue. After eight years of stagnation, our schools desperately need this boost in funding for students with special challenges,” Rep. Pope said. “While I remain optimistic for schools in Wisconsin, I’m not surprised that Republicans are continuing their stubborn notion of bi-partisanship which means - ‘only on their terms.’”

This funding has been held flat for over a decade at a reimbursement rate of about 25%, while students attending private schools under the Special Needs Voucher Program are covered at a rate of 90%. Governor Evers’ budget increases the public school reimbursement rate to 30% in the first year of the biennium and to 60% in the second year. Increasing this reimbursement rate would not only directly help special needs students but would also free up district resources previously committed to special education costs. According to the Marquette Law poll, 55% of

Wisconsinites believe that increased funding is needed for K-12 education.

“Governor Evers crafted this budget in response to what he heard directly from the people of Wisconsin. They made it clear that we must reinvest in our children’s futures and this investment can no longer wait. My democratic colleagues and I are committed to supporting the governor’s budget as it seeks to fill the funding gaps that have been created over the past eight years. Our kids deserve nothing less.”