

WILL: Governor Evers signs Public School Spending Transparency Bill into law

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WILL supported new law to develop online dashboard for public school spending

The News: Governor Tony Evers signed public school spending transparency legislation ([AB 378 / SB 373](#)) into law, Friday, initiating a new process to shed more light on how public schools spend public dollars. The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) supported the bipartisan legislation to establish a commission of public-school representatives to determine how to collect and display the information online.

The Quote: WILL Director of Education Policy, Libby Sobic, said, "WILL is proud to work with Senator Felzkowski and Representative Magnafici to craft and champion legislation to create much-needed transparency about public school funding. For the first time, the public will be able to determine just how taxpayer funds are allocated and whether it is benefitting our students and teachers."

Josh King, a parent from Oregon, Wisconsin, said, "As a parent and a proud family member to many lifelong public school teachers, this legislation is an important first step to create a benchmark in transparency about school funding. This will help parents to engage schools on resourcing agreed upon priorities."

Why WILL Supported This Legislation: Citizens want to know what is working at the district-level. They deserve to know which districts are proving efficient and which ones are wasteful. They want to know how spending correlates with academic outcomes. So, it's time to give them the proper tools. The first step is accessible, uniform information on public school district spending.

- Wisconsin's current system does not provide enough transparency on public school spending. It is nearly impossible to meaningfully compare one school district's expenditures to another since the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) only reports information on general finance data for school districts.
- Transparency legislation improves the existing requirement for the Superintendent of Public Instruction to create a "uniform financial fund accounting system" for public schools. The current system requires districts to report school spending data in large buckets, like instruction and administration. However, there is no requirement that the current system provide transparency of specific expenditures at the school level or across the district.
- Transparency legislation requires DPI to display and promote information on a user-friendly website. The current system is confusing and not user-friendly. The bill requires DPI to collect data at least annually and upload to a website that allows the public to access, sort, and download school district information.
- Other states have enacted spending transparency legislation. Texas and Georgia have created online dashboards that provide granular data on school district spending. Wisconsin does not track fiscal efficiency by districts, nor does Wisconsin analyze student achievement and school funding together.

What's Next? With the legislation signed into law, the next step will be the creation of a commission, comprised of public-school representatives, to determine exactly what information should be presented in an online dashboard.

Read More:

- [WILL Supports Public School Spending Transparency](#), September 15, 2021
- [The Case for Public School Spending Transparency](#), February 2020