

WILL: Supports public school spending transparency legislation

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Senate and Assembly committees to hold votes on key transparency legislation

The News: Wisconsin Senate and Assembly committees will hold votes on critical public school spending transparency legislation ([AB 378 / SB 373](#)) this week. The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) [supports](#) this legislation to empower school boards, taxpayers, and citizens by providing the public with uniform online information about how public schools spend money.

- Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight: Wednesday, September 15, 2021 – 2:00 pm
- Senate Committee on Education: Thursday, September 16, 2021 – 10:30 am

The Quote: WILL Director of Education Policy, Libby Sobiechowski, said, “Public schools in Wisconsin have never had more funding than they do right now. But statewide academic achievement remains stagnant. Providing Wisconsin citizens with access to basic public school spending information will prove critical to holding districts accountable.”

Why WILL Supports Public School Spending Transparency: Before citizens can know what is working at the district-level, which districts are proving efficient or wasteful, and how spending correlates with academic outcomes, they need 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.

Read More:

- [WILL Testimony](#), September 15, 2021
- [Video Demonstration of Current School Finance Reporting](#), September 14, 2021
- [The Case for Public School Spending Transparency in Wisconsin](#), February 2020