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WI Association of School Boards: Applauds proposal to invest in education

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We commend the state superintendent for calling for the investment of state funds into our local public schools, and specifically into special education, student mental health and providing flexible, spendable dollars that can be directed at the local level by school boards.

These resources are vital to the mission of public school districts to serve all students and ensure they are college and career ready.

Since schools were closed in 2020 in the face of the coronavirus pandemic and had to shift on-the-fly to virtual learning, they have been trying to play catch up to help kids recover from the interruption of in-person instruction. Hindering these efforts is the fact that public schools are dealing with record inflation, coupled with lagging state funding, staffing challenges, declining enrollment and increased student needs due to COVID-19.

All of this at the same time that public schools have seen no per pupil revenue limit increase in six of the last eight school years. One-time federal COVID relief was a fiscal lifeline for many districts, but now a “fiscal cliff” looms when that one-time federal funding runs out.

We understand that state policy makers face many worthy and competing priorities in addition to public schools that must be addressed within the confines of available revenues. With a projected state surplus of more than $5 billion, the resources are there to make meaningful investments in public education and other top budget priorities including tax relief.

On behalf of school board members throughout the state, who are serving more than 800,000 public school students, we encourage elected leaders and candidates to consider this budget request as a serious start in state budget deliberations.

John Ashley is executive director of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards.