

American Federation of Teachers Local 212: Faculty & professional staff union at MATC supports special legislative session

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American Federation of Teachers Local 212 supports Governor Evers' proposals to address Wisconsin's workforce challenges, and his call for a Special Session to enact them.

Local 212, the faculty and professional staff union at Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC), praised Evers' plan to increase general aid to the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) by \$40 million over the biennium in order to support the more than 270,000 students that enroll at a technical college.

Wisconsin's unemployment is at a record low, 2.4 percent below the national average, while the state's labor participation rate is above the national average. As a result, employers are struggling to fill open positions.

According to Local 212 President, Dr. Lisa Conley, "Technical colleges are the solution to the state's shortage of skilled and technical workers. We are the pipeline that provides Wisconsin employers with nurses, police officers, IT security technicians, respiratory therapists, electricians, administrative assistants, web designers, welders, and more. Our students live and work in Wisconsin, buying homes and supporting local businesses."

"The Governor's proposal is an investment with a very high rate of return," explained Luz Sosa, an MATC economics instructor. "MATC and our students generate \$1.5 billion dollars of economic activity in the district annually. One dollar

of public investment has a rate of return of \$2.70. Governor Evers' proposal to increase technical college funding will more than pay for itself."

Governor Evers is also proposing to increase by \$17.5 million the funding for the Wisconsin Grants program, which provides college students with need-based financial aid. This includes \$3.5 million for the technical college students who have the most unmet needs of all Wisconsin college students, estimated at over \$8,000 annually per student.

Liz Franczyk, Executive Director of the Local 212 FAST Fund at MATC, an independent, non-profit organization that provides emergency assistance to MATC students, explained, "Financial aid does not come close to covering the cost of college attendance. Pell Grants, which once covered 100% of the cost, now cover less than 60%. As a result, technical college students face unprecedented levels of housing and food insecurity, undermining their ability to complete their programs. The Governor's proposal to increase Wisconsin Grant won't solve the shortfall but is a step in the right direction."

The American Federation of Teachers Local 212 represents Milwaukee Area Technical Colleges' 1500 faculty, professional staff, counselors and television engineers. It was founded in 1930 and was the first higher education labor union in the nation to negotiate a labor agreement.