STATE AFFAIRS
WISPOLITICS
Wisconsin's Premier Political News Service

Rep. Madison: Republicans reinforce the school to prison pipeline while failing to address school's actual needs

Posted on Wednesday, Mar 15, 2023

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. Get the app or access via desktop.

MADISON – Today, Assembly Republicans passed AB 53 (61-35) and AB 69 (59-36) which rollback progress that students and youth justice advocates have organized and fought for in schools across Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Legislative Socialist Caucus issued the following joint statement:

"It is our philosophy that those who are directly impacted by problems are the closest to the solutions. Students, teachers, and parents have made it abundantly clear that in order to create safe and thriving school communities we must invest in mental health services, teacher funding, healthy school meals, early intervention programs, and more.

Instead, Assembly Republicans have passed AB 53 and AB 69 which will reinforce the school to prison pipeline by requiring that certain incidents, not just crimes, be reported to law enforcement and requiring certain schools to employ armed school resources officers. There is no research-based evidence that police involvement in schools improves safety, but there is countless evidence that they disproportionately impact students of color. In the 2017-18 school year, Wisconsin was more likely than any other state in the country to refer Native students to law enforcement, reporting a rate over three times higher than the rate of referral for their white peers – with referrals for Black students not far behind. AB 69 will clearly funnel more young people into our justice system.

It is for this reason that Black, Brown, and Indigenous youth advocates across our state have organized to make their schools a safer environment by removing police officers. In Milwaukee, Leaders Igniting Transformation and other youth justice activists successfully advocated to terminate MPS's contract with the Milwaukee Police Department, which was passed unanimously by the Milwaukee School Board of Directors. In Madison, the Freedom Youth Squad, in collaboration with Freedom Inc. and Urban Triage, led a campaign that resulted in a unanimous vote by the Madison Metropolitan School Board to terminate their contract with the Madison Police Department. Elsewhere across our state, from La Crosse to Shorewood, students have advocated for the removal of school resource officers. AB 69 undermines local control and is a direct insult to the students, parents, school boards, and communities who have made decisions that make their local communities safer.

Instead of forcing school districts to use already limited funds to hire school resource officers that they do not want, we should be investing in evidence-based programs that actually support public safety. Gov. Evers' budget proposes a wide range of investments that will build safer and more resilient communities such as creating the Right to Council for those facing eviction, declaring 2023 the year of Mental Health and permanently funding the 'Kid Gets Ahead' mental health initiative, and of course, the Governor's historic proposed investments in our school system. Our school districts, our communities, and most importantly our students, need more resources, not more police."