

Rep. Stubbs: Statement on 2023-2025 biennial budget

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MADISON, Wis. — Yesterday, the Wisconsin State Assembly finished debating the 2023-2025 biennial budget. Representative Shelia Stubbs issued the following statement:

“Last night, the Wisconsin Legislature concluded the 2023-25 biennial budget debates and sent the controversial bill to the desk of the governor. The process to craft a state budget that adequately meets the needs of Wisconsin and Wisconsinites has been long and contentious. And sadly, the budget brought forth and passed by my Republican colleagues does not achieve this goal. During the budget process, I and my democratic colleagues have been consistently disappointed by the exclusion of many practical budget initiatives initially proposed by Governor Evers. The governor’s initial budget would have improved the health and wellbeing of all Wisconsinites and propelled our state forward, just as our motto decrees.”

“Of the many impractical and negatively consequential choices my Republican colleagues have made while formulating their budget, one that cannot go unaddressed is their choice to cut necessary funding to our UW System. In the name of dismantling Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programming, my colleagues have chosen to impede \$32 million dollars’ worth of funding from reaching our University of Wisconsin campuses. This decision is only harmful. It will cause long-lasting damage to our university system, its students and staff, and to our state as a whole. It will prevent our UW System from implementing necessary measures to address widespread systemic disadvantages. It will drive bright minds away from our campuses, because bright minds are drawn towards diversity, equity and inclusion. Bright minds seek out environments that will challenge their world views and bring new perspective and they wholly understand the necessity of navigating

even the most uncomfortable aspects of our nation's past. The choice to deny funding to our UW System shows how clearly out-of-touch members on the other side of the aisle are on matters of equity in the state of Wisconsin."

"In addition to cutting DEI funding to our UW System, Republicans have attacked many other clearly needed funding initiatives. In their initial sweeping omnibus budget motion, Republicans struck over 500 critical items. This includes funding to improve accessible childcare, and thus, enhance the lives of all working Wisconsinites. Accessible childcare is essential to our economy, allowing Wisconsin's hard working residents to contribute to our workforce while balancing raising their family in safe, healthy communities. They also cut funding to address the widespread mental health crisis we face, especially in the wake of the life-altering global pandemic from which we're still emerging. Some of this mental health funding would have gone towards enhancing school-based mental health professional services and providing peer to peer suicide prevention grants. With suicide as a leading cause of death among our youth today, one would think these initiatives merit a place in our state's overall budget. Additionally, Republicans refused to include ample funding to provide extended postpartum care for newborns and mothers, which would decrease poor outcomes among these vulnerable Wisconsinites and improve our communities' overall health and wellbeing. Over this process, the Republicans have drastically gutted the originally proposed budget and excluded a wide variety of funding initiatives for the good of Wisconsinites."

"As a champion of the people and of equity in Wisconsin, I could not in good faith, vote to approve the final version of the budget presented on the floor. My heart ached as I watched my many of my colleagues' rollback incredible feats of progress that have only served to enhance the lives and prospects of Wisconsinites. This process has exposed some hard truths about where some of my colleagues' priorities lie. In response to the proposed budget, the democratic caucus introduce 13 omnibus budget amendments that encompassed a wide range of initiatives we felt were fundamental to include in the budget. These amendments were not well-received to our extreme frustration and disappointment."

"And now the fight continues. Wisconsinites, know this: Every day, I and my Democratic colleagues work hard to ensure the voices and needs of our people are reflected by our actions in the legislature. I will not stop working to build a state comprised of safe, sustainable, equitable communities. I will never accept injustice and intolerance. I swore an oath when taking this office that I will work for the

people, not against them. If anything, this highly disappointing budget result has only given me more resolve to fight for the Wisconsin I know we deserve.”