

Rep. Cruz: A sensible plan to lower property taxes: Fund public schools

Posted on Monday, Mar 16, 2026

>> **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, WI – State Representative Angelina Cruz (D-Racine), alongside Representative Christian Phelps (D-Eau Claire), has introduced legislation to provide meaningful property tax relief and increase state support for Wisconsin's public schools. The proposal would use a portion of the state's surplus to increase general school aid and raise the state reimbursement rate for special education costs, helping ease pressure on local property taxpayers and providing greater financial stability for school districts.

"People across Wisconsin want and deserve action," said Rep. Cruz. "School administrators, educators, and school board members are pleading for meaningful support for public education. We are responding with a sensible, fiscally responsible plan that uses part of the surplus to support our schools and lower pressure on property taxpayers."

The Phelps-Cruz bill increases state general school aid by \$445,949,400 for the 2026-27 school year. By increasing the state's share of school funding, the proposal is projected to provide significant relief to property taxpayers who have increasingly been asked to cover the costs of public education at the local level.

The legislation also addresses one of the largest financial challenges facing school districts: the cost of providing special education services. The bill raises the reimbursement rate for eligible special education costs to 60 percent for the current school year and the next. Funding would be provided on a sum-sufficient basis, ensuring school districts receive the full 60 percent reimbursement.

"While this still falls short of the level of support many districts need, increasing reimbursement to 60 percent would provide critical relief for public schools," Cruz

said. “It would help stabilize school district budgets and reduce the need for operating referendums in communities across Wisconsin.”

The proposal also helps the state better meet its constitutional responsibility to support public education under Article X, Section 3 of the Wisconsin Constitution. Over the past decade and a half, declining state support has forced many districts to rely on local referendums, contributing to rising property taxes in communities statewide.

School districts facing rising costs and limited state support have increasingly turned to local referendums to maintain staffing, programs, and operations. “We have been living with the consequences of long-term disinvestment in our public schools,” Cruz said. “This legislation is a step toward correcting that. By increasing the state’s investment in public education, we can support our schools while delivering meaningful relief to property taxpayers.”

The proposal is estimated to use approximately \$1.3 billion of the state’s surplus.