

Sen. Larson: Legislative Democrats introduce package of bills to address teacher shortages, support new and experienced educators

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Madison, WI – Senator Chris Larson, the ranking Democratic on the Senate Education Committee, offered this statement upon introduction of the Teaching is a Profession legislative package.

“For years, our kids have been neglected, test scores have dropped, and our national ranking has diminished. Parents have sounded the alarm only to be ignored by the state, budget after budget.

“The combination of underfunding our public schools while attacking public workers has exacerbated the crisis around hiring and retaining quality educators in our state. In fact, nearly half of Wisconsin teachers leave the field within seven years. This legislative package will grow and strengthen our education workforce by treating teachers as professionals once again.

“By establishing higher wage floors and tying pay increases to longevity of service, we can assure that our educators are paid fairly, incentivizing them to continue exercising their passion for providing outstanding instruction to our kids. Furthermore, this package enacts guaranteed teacher preparation periods, offers a seat at the table for educators in school district decisions, and helps our districts prepare the next generation of teachers through paid student teaching and “grow your own” grants.

“The benefits of reestablishing the legislative and societal value of teaching as a

profession, one that's worth pursuing as a lifelong career, cannot be overstated. This is especially true when looking at future generations of educators in Wisconsin who may have been steered away due to low wages and an unfortunate lack of respect. To attract and retain quality educators, we must listen to the folks in the field, who for too long have had their voices silenced. Respect, support, and appreciation must be reestablished to mitigate the detrimental effects of the cynical attacks on the teaching profession and on public education overall.

“The initiatives outlined in this package offer a clear path forward that supports our students and families by bolstering a professional education workforce, dedicated to helping Wisconsin kids flourish.”