

For Immediate Release

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### **Disability Rights Wisconsin Reacts to Wisconsin Policy Forum Report**

Madison, WI - Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is encouraged to see The Wisconsin Policy Forum shining a light on the decade long flat funding for special education services for students with disabilities but was disappointed to see the report inaccurately connect lack of funding for all due to special education funding. This linkage is likely to pit groups of students and their families against one another in a fight for education and equity for all students in our state.

“The report highlights the lack of funding over the last decade but fails to recognize that students with disabilities are regular education students too and most students with disabilities are educated alongside the peers in the classroom,” commented Sally Flaschberger, Lead Advocacy Specialist.

Education is mandated for all students in Wisconsin and is not limited to students with disabilities. The Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding was convened last year by the legislature to address the issue of education funding in our State and the funding models Wisconsin continues to use year after year. The Commission heard testimony from experts on other models being used across the country for school funding, including special education funding. The commission chose to tweak current funding models without recommending major overhauls that could provide true equity for all students.

We all benefit when there is education equity for students across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background and family income. Governor Evers’ proposal to increase special education aid will help move all of our children forward. After almost a decade of flat funding, the proposal would have finally addressed the serious gap in state funding for special education and would meet the increasing costs districts all over the state are facing to educate children with disabilities.

“Disability Rights Wisconsin agrees with the report’s assessment that a shortfall in State and Federal Special Education aids has forced districts to use funding that could serve all students, including students with disabilities whose main source of education is from the general fund,” said Lea Kitz, Executive Director.

*Disability Rights Wisconsin is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin, charged with protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and keeping individuals free from abuse and neglect.*

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