



# Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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For Immediate Release

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## **Survival Coalition Encourages Joint Finance to Fund \$600 Million in Special Education**

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin disability organizations is releasing a revealing report from parents statewide as the legislature's Joint Finance Committee prepares to vote on special education funding this Thursday. The Survival Coalition supports the Governor's recommendation to fund special education at 60% and finally ending 10 years of flat funding.

Lisa Pugh, co-chair of the Survival Coalition said, "The State has not increased special funding for a decade, forcing local districts to make up the difference. Survival Coalition has heard from families around the state about significant erosion in quality of education for their children with disabilities with a direct impact on student achievement, emotional well-being, and safety."

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations recently gathered stories from nearly 200 families, with 94% responding that additional funding would help their school district provide better education for their child with a disability. "Families want policymakers to understand what their children face in our school districts without sufficient funding. The stories often applauded efforts of local teachers and schools, but clearly show the lack of funding as effecting quality." said Beth Swedeen, co-chair of Survival Coalition.

Here is a sampling of stories included in the report located at this link:

- More help is needed in classroom. Last year I had to pull my child out of class because there was only one para and one teacher for 16 special needs children.
- My daughter who was born Deaf has not had access to an American Sign Language Interpreter from age 3 until Kindergarten.

Special education categorical aid in Wisconsin has remained flat for a decade while special education costs have increased more than 60% since 2000. This has resulted in the rate of state funding reimbursement falling from to an all-time low of under 25%. The legislative fiscal bureau paper offers two alternatives to the governor's budget with one option increasing funding to 36% over the next 10 years or a flat 30% going forward while also documenting cost increases of 65% over the last ten years.

Survival co-chair Kit Kerschensteiner said, “The personal stories that families shared in this report demonstrate the range of problems resulting from lack of resources, including inadequate paraprofessionals, increased segregation, youth not prepared for employment and independent living, and lack of professional development. We continue to leave students with disabilities behind with no substantial increase in funding.” Additional funding in special education would free up substantial local funding that could be used to help support all students across Wisconsin school district.

You can read the full Survival Coalition stories report: [http://www.survivalcoalitionwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/SurvivalCoalitionReport\\_SpecialEdFunding.pdf](http://www.survivalcoalitionwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/SurvivalCoalitionReport_SpecialEdFunding.pdf)

*Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.*

Real Lives, Real Work, Real Smart, Wisconsin  
Investing in People with Disabilities