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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 11, 2019

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GOP Guts Governor Evers Budget

Governor Evers has traveled the state, listening to everyday Wisconsinites to find out what is needed in the budget. Talking with educators, farmers, scientists, blue collar workers, white collar workers, health care professionals and others, his goal was to create a budget that directly reflected what the people of Wisconsin said they need. He moved us away from budgets that reflect handouts to rich people and special interests, as the previous governor had submitted for four budget cycles.

These listening sessions resulted in Governor Evers' "People's Budget". It reflects an increase in K-12 funding (including a significant increase in special education funding), increases access to affordable healthcare, ensures nonpartisan district drawing to fight against unfair legislative maps, strengthens environmental protection, and so much more.

Legislative Republicans have either completely removed or drastically reduced many of the most important issues.

Governor Evers' health care plan was a slam dunk. His budget funded all Wisconsin health care investments and expanded Medicaid. He accomplished all of this while still saving the state more than \$320 million. Republicans slashed his ideas, and took Wisconsin health care in the wrong direction- their proposal spends more Wisconsin taxpayer money to provide health care to fewer people. It is a fiscally irresponsible move by legislative Republicans.

Overall, they cut the health services budget by \$1.11 billion, a 44% cut. In addition, Republicans cut crisis intervention services by 64%, lead exposure and poisoning prevention by 67%, behavioral health by 64%, dementia initiatives by 73%, and dental access initiatives by 100%.

Perhaps saddest of all are the cuts Republicans have made to Governor Evers' K-12 budget. A lifelong educator who was the head of public education in Wisconsin for almost ten years, Governor Evers has firsthand experience of what the needs of education in Wisconsin are, and it showed in his budget. Republicans proceeded to gut that, as well.

Governor Evers' budget attempted to fully fund public education once again, after years of the previous administration underfunding schoolchildren. Yet legislative Republicans took Governor Evers' \$1.4 billion plan and cut it by almost one billion dollars. General school aid is cut by 59% in the budget's first year and 39% in the budget's second year.

Special education was hit hard by Republican cuts as well. Governor Evers laid out a plan to eventually increase reimbursement rates to 60% for special education. The Republican plan cuts that reimbursement rate in half, to 30%. Overall, Governor Evers planned to increase spending on special education by \$606 million. Republicans cut that by 84%, to \$97 million.

The big question is "Why?" Why would Republicans make such deep cuts to these important issues? It certainly can't be "fiscal responsibility" as some might claim- as already stated, their health care plan actually spends *more* money to insure *fewer* Wisconsinites. One can only assume that, as ever, their sights are set on the next election, and they want to make sure that Democrats will have as few accomplishments to run on as possible. This is the wrong way to govern, and I can only hope that the legislative majority comes to their senses and stops putting politics before people.

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