

WISCONSIN PUBLIC EDUCATION NETWORK RK

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It's Time to Rally for What's Best for Kids. Public School Advocates Marching 60 Miles for 60%

Heather DuBois Bourenane, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Public Education Network, and Milwaukee Public Schools Board Director Megan O'Halloran issued this joint statement today:

When is Wisconsin going to put our children first? When are lawmakers going to stop playing politics with our kids?

We are marching 60 miles – from Palmyra to Madison – with parents, board members, school leaders and others to demand restoration of *the* \$900 million cut from the proposed education budget. Wisconsin children will continue to suffer if the state once again lets them down with insufficient funding.

We are marching to demand the budget our children deserve.

We invite all Wisconsinites to join us – whether you can walk 60 miles or 60 steps. Our goal is to send a strong message that Wisconsin stands with its children, and our march is a symbolic journey toward funding fairness. Our March to Madison will be complemented by local actions in various communities around the state and we encourage everyone to stand up where they live for the budget that's best for kids.

The public is invited to join the marchers for as little or as long as they wish throughout the journey, and to cheer on the marchers at the whistle-stops that will be held daily along the route. The march will end with a rally at the Capitol on Tuesday, June 25 at 2:30 pm following a final 2-mile walk from East High School (estimated departure time 1:30 pm). Parking and return shuttles are available at all of the stop/start points along the route. Opportunities to participate are available at every stop, and there is no expectation that individuals will march for the full duration. Join when you can, and encourage others to do the same.

For route specifics and to register for the march or rallies, or to support the effort with a donation, visit: <http://www.wisconsinnetwork.org/blog/march>.

We are marching to demand lawmakers take seriously addressing the crisis they themselves created by chronically underfunding our public schools. We are demanding restoration of critically needed funds in the following areas:

- **Special Education: restore the reimbursement to 30% in year one and 60% in year two.** Special education funding has been frozen for a decade, creating an annual funding gap of \$1 billion. Districts fill this gap by using money from their general funds, and all students suffer. The plan on the table (26% year one, 30% year two) is an insult to our children and confirms the message heard loud and clear in previous budget cycles: Wisconsin lawmakers do not value children with disabilities.
- **Mental Health: provide aid at the full level proposed by the Governor.** This amount was itself insufficient and only funded applications that were rejected in the last round of insufficiently funded competitive mental health grants.
- **Bilingual/Bicultural aid: restore the funding proposed by the Governor.** Wisconsin's funding for English Language Learners was called "pitiful" by an expert who testified before the Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding, and our reimbursement rate is the lowest in the nation. Joint Finance completely rejected all new aid for this category from the budget.

We expect lawmakers to come together across party differences to pass a budget, on time, that meets the immediate needs of our children and puts Wisconsin on a path toward fairness, and a future where all of our children have equal opportunity to succeed.

We call on everyone who cares about kids to stand up for the budget our children deserve, wherever you are in Wisconsin. If you cannot join the march or rallies, you can participate by holding an event in your own district or simply by contacting your own lawmakers to make sure they hear this message statewide.

The Stand Up for Public Schools March will follow this itinerary (arrival times approximate):

Sat June 22: Palmyra to Fort Atkinson HS | 18 miles

9:00 am Kickoff: Palmyra High School
12:30 pm Whistlestop: Hebron
5:00 pm Arrive Fort Atkinson

Sun June 23: Fort Atkinson to Deerfield | 16.5 miles

9:00 am Depart Fort Atkinson
12:30 pm Whistlestop: Cambridge High School
5:00 pm Arrive Deerfield

Mon June 24: Deerfield to Sun Prairie | 18.5 miles

8:30 am Depart Deerfield
12:30 pm Whistlestop: Marshall
5:00 pm Arrive Sun Prairie, Patrick Marsh Middle School

Tues June 25: Sun Prairie to State Capitol | 14 miles total

8:30 am Depart Sun Prairie
12:30 pm Whistlestop: Madison East High School
1:30 pm Depart East High School for Final March to State Capitol
2:30 pm Rally at State Capitol

A common-sense, fully-funded, bipartisan-supported plan that could have set Wisconsin on a path toward school funding fairness is in the garbage, and the plan on the table - which doesn't even keep pace with inflation - is being touted as a "historic investment." \$900 million has been gutted from the Governor's budget proposal, and the bare-bones version we see now willfully ignores the critical concerns heard by lawmakers at public hearings over the past two years.

The budget that our lawmakers will vote on the last week of June doesn't even attempt to close Wisconsin's shameful funding gaps. This budget put forward by the Joint Finance Committee is an investment in widening those gaps and preserving the status quo, deepening the divide between "haves" and "have nots" in and across our communities and schools.

Worse, legislative leadership is signaling a willingness to hold our children hostage in a budget standoff should the Governor reject a budget that clearly underfunds and undervalues our kids – yet again.

We're marching to demand lawmakers stop playing politics with our kids. Join us.

860,000 kids are counting on us.

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How much does the Wisconsin legislature value students with disabilities?

90%

private voucher kids

2017: Joint Finance shoves last-minute, unvetted proposal into budget that allows over 90% reimbursement for additional costs of services for students getting special needs voucher. Services do not need to be approved by IEP team. No limit on spending or need for proof of impact.

25%

public school kids

2019: Public begs to end 10 year freeze on special ed funding for public schools. Evers & bipartisan Blue Ribbon Commission propose 60% reimbursement of actual, mandated costs. Joint Finance trashes budget, says 60% "not going to happen" but retains 90% rate for private school students.

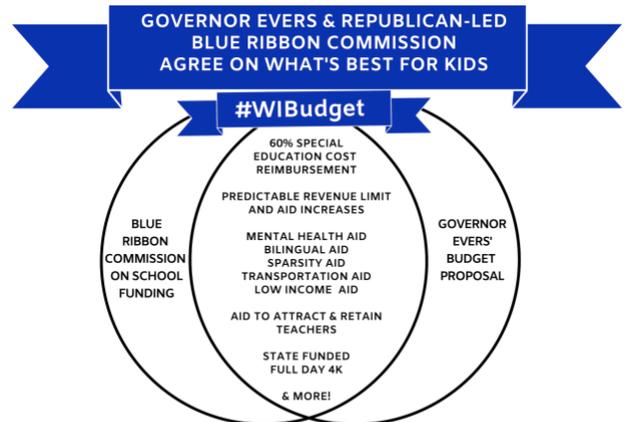
Restoring our public school commitment to

60%

is a first step toward funding fairness.



Do your job.
860,000 kids are counting on a budget that meets their needs.



Let's build the blue ribbon budget our kids deserve. 860,000 children are counting on us.

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