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GOP Budget Fails Wisconsin Children - Needs Veto

Milwaukee, WI – On Thursday, the Republican-controlled Committee on Joint Finance finalized the 2021-2023 biennial state budget proposal, moving it to the full legislature for debate and passage. Unfortunately, Republican legislators cobbled together a document that does not share nor reflect our Wisconsin values. State Senator Chris Larson offered the following statement:

“The Republican-controlled budget committee pushed through a disappointingly partisan, unacceptable, and insufficient state budget that utterly ignores Wisconsin’s current needs. When did Republicans think it became politically acceptable to attack our kids?”

“There is never an excuse for underfunding K-12 public education. But starving our public schools is dangerously immoral when there is also a \$4.4 billion projected surplus and \$2.3 billion in federal aid to help make sure our kids have the best opportunity to succeed.

“Governor Evers proposed a \$612.8 million increase in K-12 funding, which Republicans slashed to a mere \$128 million. In addition to being woefully inadequate, their cut would have put in peril \$2.3 billion in federal aid. After over a month of stalling, the GOP-led Joint Committee on Finance devised a fiscal sleight-of-hand that still is inadequate and still might not meet federal maintenance of effort requirements. Attempting to fool the federal government, GOP leaders allocated \$408 million into the general school fund, but also capped local revenue limits. This means that our schools will not actually see any of these funds, rather the allocation is diverted to an insignificant property tax decrease.

“This Republican scheme is simply a game of three-card monte being played with our children's education needs.

“Our state is still recovering from the more than \$1 billion the Walker administration slashed from education funding a decade ago. Now as we climb out of the pandemic, our kids need resources to achieve a quality education. We must make significant investments in our K-12 schools, and restore our historic two-thirds funding commitment for schools. Investing \$709 million in special education would increase reimbursements of local taxpayer costs to 50%, and increasing general aid by \$600 million over the biennium would ensure our schools a swift recovery. Properly funding our state’s education system is a priority, we cannot settle for the continued educational disinvestment that Republicans continue to push.

“As the Republican budget quickly advances to the full legislature, it is important to note that Education funding is just one of the priorities it fails to adequately address. Here are just a few more of the many ways the Republican budget neglects Wisconsin’s needs:

- The proposed budget completely disregards climate change, slashing the Governor’s proposal for establishing an Office of Environment Justice.

- It prohibits Wisconsin from joining 38 other states in expanding Medicaid services.
- It rejects \$165 million in new revenue through marijuana legalization
- It eliminates \$75 million from the Governor's proposed \$200 million in broadband funding.
- It fails to address common sense criminal justice reform.
- The proposed budget fails to provide for Wisconsin's workers by axing the Governor's proposal to increase the minimum wage.
- It refuses to expand Bucky's tuition promise which provides more than 2,500 low-income students with free tuition.
- It reduces Wisconsin's third tax bracket from 6.27 percent to 5.3 percent, which applies to individuals who make between \$23,930 and \$263,480, a cut that is geared toward the wealthy.
- It doubles down on Republicans' desire to rig the maps in their favor by shooting down the proposal for the people of Wisconsin to have a say in what their districts look like through the People's Maps Commission.

“The people of Wisconsin deserve a transparent, honest budget that ensures we bounce back better than before the pandemic hit. Governor Evers offered us a compromise step forward, Republican legislators' proposal would drag us two steps back. If this is not corrected before going to the Governor's desk, the only reasonable response can be an immediate veto.”

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