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For Immediate Release

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Students with Disabilities Must be a Priority for Incoming Administration.

Madison, WI- President-Elect Trump's choice to head the US Department of Education is raising red flags for Wisconsin disability groups. The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations is specifically concerned about remarks nominee Betsy DeVos made about students with disabilities during her Senate confirmation hearing. As the nation transitions into new leadership, the Coalition anticipates major changes to education policies. Protecting the rights of students with disabilities and holding all schools accountable for educating children with disabilities is a priority for the Survival Coalition.

"The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - IDEA is one of the longest standing federal laws protecting the rights of students with disabilities across our Nation," said Beth Swedeen, Survival Co-Chair, "Parents of children with disabilities fought long and hard for this law. We want to ensure that the person responsible for upholding IDEA fully understands why students' rights must be preserved."

Across Wisconsin more than 120,000 students receive services under IDEA and are provided a Free and Appropriate Public Education protected by the State law. IDEA allows children with disabilities to access their neighborhood schools alongside their peers and receive the same high quality general education programming with necessary supports and services.

In her confirmation testimony Ms. De Vos refused to agree that all schools; public, charter and choice receiving public dollars should be held equally accountable. "School across the country and in Wisconsin receiving public funds should be accountable for student success, including the success of all students with disabilities" added Co-Chair, Kit Kerschensteiner. "Without an apples to apples accountability system, students with disabilities may be the first to suffer from low expectations."

Survival Coalition supports high expectations for all students with disabilities. This means students must be fully included in the general education curriculum and classroom, learning alongside their peers without disabilities.

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