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### **Disability Rights Wisconsin Commends Governor Walker's Commitment to Wisconsin Students with Disabilities**

Madison, WI- Governor Walker's recent announcement regarding education in the state budget, highlighted investments in programs that will support children with disabilities in schools across Wisconsin. The budget is expected to include several proposals related to employment and mental health. The Governor has also included funding for the Milwaukee Public Schools which will enhance the lives of student in one of the poorest area of the State. Disability Rights Wisconsin looks forward to working collaboratively with the Governor and members of the legislature to address these and other priority issues for children with disabilities in our schools.

"Disability Rights is pleased to see the Governor's commitment to students with disabilities in the forefront of his budget," says Daniel Idzikowski, Executive Director of Disability Rights Wisconsin. "Funding for the new employment initiatives for youth with disabilities advances the Governor's goals to increase the Wisconsin workforce. These funds will help increase the number of students with disabilities employed in our communities."

Disability Rights Wisconsin has worked to advance these employment initiatives for school districts with policymakers. The proposal provides over \$7 million during the biennium to help students with disabilities obtain employment and to assist school districts in these efforts. School districts will now have additional funding to meet the transition goals of students with disabilities, as required by the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The Governor also proposed \$7 million in mental health supports and services for students. The increases include a special initiative in the Milwaukee Public Schools in collaboration with DCF. It will also help fund increasing social workers in school, connecting youth with mental health services and more training for school personnel.

Phyllis Greenberger, Lead Advocate on Children's Mental Health issues at DRW said, "DPI estimates that one in five school-age children struggle with mental illness and 80% do not get professional help. There are an estimated 95,000 children in Wisconsin with serious mental illness. These new resources for schools will allow students to finally have greater access to mental health services at school."

Disability Rights Wisconsin looks forward to working with the Joint Finance Committee to advance these budget proposals, and other initiatives to help improve the lives of Wisconsin children with disabilities.

*Disability Rights Wisconsin is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy agency for the State of Wisconsin.*

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