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Protection and advocacy for people with disabilities.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Disability Rights Wisconsin Calls for Special Education Budget Investment

Madison, WI – Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is calling upon the Joint Finance Committee of the state legislature to support a state budget investment that funds 50% of special education expenses for Wisconsin's nearly 118,000 public school students with disabilities, when the committee meets on Thursday to take up the education provisions in the budget. Unfortunately, the proposal released in advance of the meeting offers only three insufficient options: moving backward with a funding freeze, staying level with the current reimbursement rate, or a minimal increase.

"Wisconsin has underfunded special education for years and none of the options that the JFC has proposed come close to meeting the need for our students with disabilities," declared Lea Kitz, DRW's Executive Director. "We hear every day about the struggles of students with disabilities and their families as their schools contend with stretching limited resources. Especially in this pandemic time, our students deserve a state budget that steps up to invest in their future in the workforce and our communities."

Wisconsin's ongoing failure to provide adequate state funding for special education is a fully separate issue from one-time pandemic-specific federal funding. The American Rescue Plan funding is designated for pandemic recovery and must not be used as an excuse to once again evade our state's obligation to properly fund special education this coming biennium and into the future. Disability Rights Wisconsin calls on the Joint Finance Committee to advance a state budget commitment of 50% reimbursement for special education.

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Disability Rights Wisconsin is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin, charged with protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and keeping individuals free from abuse and neglect