



DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Sen. Jon Erpenbach (608) 266-6670
Sen. LaTonya Johnson (608) 266-2500
Rep. Evan Goyke (608) 266-0645
Rep. Greta Neubauer (608) 266-0634

Budget Bulletin: What's Happening with School Funding

A Recap of Joint Finance Committee Action on the 2021-23 State Budget

MADISON – The Joint Finance Committee (JFC) continued to work through the budget process in an executive session on Thursday, May 27, 2021. JFC took action on budget items for the UW System, Department of Public Instruction, and the Wisconsin Technical College System. The Republican funding choices made on Thursday failed to meet the needs of Wisconsin students and families as we work to recover from COVID-19 and put federal COVID-19 aid for schools across Wisconsin in jeopardy. In an effort to help keep Wisconsin citizens more informed, Democratic members on the committee provided the following recap of what happened in the budget hearing and how that impacts Wisconsin communities:

Department of Public Instruction

Democrats on the committee offered [Motion #51](#) which was nearly identical to [Governor Evers' DPI budget](#). This motion would have provided a significant funding increase for students, special education services (\$709.5 million), and mental health care (\$46.5 million). Motion #51 would have helped students succeed by recommitting the state to fund two-thirds of school revenues, investing \$1.556 billion in classrooms, \$19.96 million in sparsity aid, and \$4 million in high cost transportation aid. Wisconsin students suffered greatly during the pandemic and these investments are crucial to ensure every student has the best opportunity to succeed. The motion failed on a party line vote with Republicans voting against 4-11.

The Republicans on the committee moved [Motion #59](#), which included significantly less new school funding, failed to increase general aid for schools, and cut the Governor's special education funding plan by 90%. Currently, funding levels in this motion would not meet the maintenance of effort to qualify for federal coronavirus funds, meaning Wisconsin would not qualify for any of the federal funds in the CARES, CAA or ARPA for ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief). This motion neglects our schools and communities, who can't afford to lay off teachers, eliminate courses, and defer safety and maintenance projects. The motion passed on a party line vote 11-4.

Higher Education (UW System, Higher Educational Aids Board and Technical College System)

Democrats on the committee offered omnibus [Motion #55](#) (as amended, with removal of item 1) for the Wisconsin Tech College System, Higher Educational Aids Board and UW System. The motion would fund the Governor's budget requests for all of higher education, including fully funding the UW tuition freeze for the biennium and over \$187 million in total additional state tax dollar investment in higher education compared to current funding levels. The motion failed on a party line vote with Republicans voting against 4-11.

Republicans offered omnibus [Motion #58](#) for higher education. The motion failed to increase general aids for UW system and HEAB, with total additional state tax dollar investment of just \$21 million for the biennium. The motion also failed to address the UW system in-state tuition freeze, which is set to expire at the end of 2019-21 biennium. After the expiration, the UW Board of Regents are likely to increase UW system tuition for in-state students and their families after 8 years of the freeze. Finally, the motion's spending increase fails to meet the minimum maintenance of effort requirements under the federal coronavirus acts, meaning without additional investment in higher ed (along with K-12 above), Wisconsin would not currently qualify for ESSER funds. The motion passed on a party line vote 11-4.