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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 17, 2018

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Massive Education Cuts Are Having Predictable Results

By Rep. Gary Hebl

In 2011, Wisconsin saw drastic cuts to public education thanks to the policies of Governor Scott Walker. In the ensuing years, we have seen millions slashed from public K-12 schools, public universities, and technical colleges. Democrats predicted that without proper funding Wisconsin's history of giving its students a strong educational foundation would slip. Sadly, we are seeing evidence of those Walker funding cuts now.

Recent testing shows more than half of Wisconsin students are ranked below average on standardized tests. Average ACT scores for 11th graders have been steadily declining, from 22.2 in 2011, before Walker's policies took hold, to 20.5 in 2016 and down to 19.7 this year. A steady decline in educational funding is leading to a steady decline in standardized test scores, just as Democrats predicted.

A report released earlier this month showed Wisconsin taxpayers are being asked to approve up to \$1.4 billion in school referendums this fall. The previous record for approved school referendums was less than \$1.1 billion. There has been so little help for educational funding from the legislature since 2011 that school districts and Wisconsin taxpayers have had to resort to extreme measures to make sure their schools have sufficient funding so that they can keep the lights on and to ensure their children get a quality education.

There is hope for the future. Democrats in the Wisconsin Legislature have put forward numerous plans to help close achievement gaps, increase funding, and improve education, all of which should help increase test scores for Wisconsin school children. Unfortunately, very few Democratic bills receive committee hearings from the majority party, and even fewer ever get a vote. Wisconsin needs a return to a Legislature that will prioritize their school children and their education.

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