

TO: All Legislators  
FROM: Representative Jonathan Brostoff, Senator Chris Larson  
DATE: June 16, 2017  
RE: Co-Sponsorship of LRB-0996/2 Relating to: The Public Education Reinvestment Act (PERA)  
**DEADLINE: June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Our state's public education is in crisis. Each year nearly 7,000 students drop out of high school, increasing their chance of unemployment, incarceration, and need for government assistance as adults. Wisconsin's gap in graduation rates for African American students and white students is the highest in the nation. Lower class size is linked to better test scores and higher graduation rates, especially for economically disadvantaged children.

Wisconsin's K-3 Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program employed smaller class sizes in select districts. These classes scored significantly higher on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills in reading, language arts, mathematics, and in total scores. Gains for African American students were greater than those for white students.

In addition to SAGE, Wisconsin is currently funding a second and unsuccessful educational experiment using vouchers that drain public school districts. Those resources would be better used directly reinvesting into public education in Wisconsin.

Evidence shows that even at the college level class size matters, so it makes no sense that we stop smaller class sizes at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in SAGE. The Public Education Reinvestment Act (PERA) would expand the smaller class size model state wide and across all K-12 grades, while phasing out the failed voucher experiment and reinvesting in public education in Wisconsin.

#### *Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau*

This bill repeals the Achievement Gap Reduction (AGR) program created in 2015 Wisconsin Act 53, reinstates an expanded Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program, and phases out the Milwaukee, Racine, and statewide parental choice programs (together, choice programs). Both the AGR and SAGE programs are categorical aid programs that provide funding to participating schools for low-income pupils enrolled in participating grades if the participating school complies with a five-year contract entered into between a school board, on behalf of the participating school, and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Under the AGR program repealed in this bill, a participating grade is a grade from kindergarten to third grade that is subject to an AGR contract. The expanded SAGE program established under this bill applies to all grades, from four-year-old kindergarten through grade 12.

Under the AGR program repealed in this bill, a school board must implement one or more of the following strategies in each class in each participating grade at each participating school:

1. Reduce the class size to 18 pupils or, if a classroom has at least two regular classroom teachers, to 30 pupils, and provide professional development on small group instruction.
2. Provide instructional coaching for teachers.
3. Provide one-to-one tutoring to pupils who struggle with reading or math. Under the expanded SAGE program created in this bill, each participating school must reduce the class size of each class in the school to 18 pupils or, if a classroom has at least two regular classroom teachers, to 30 pupils. In addition, the school board must:
  - a) Ensure that certain education and human services are available in each participating school.
  - b) Ensure that a rigorous curriculum is provided in each participating school.

- c) Provide staff development and require professional staff accountability for staff in each participating school.

Under the AGR program repealed in this bill, DPI must pay to a school board under an AGR contract a per pupil amount determined by dividing the amount appropriated to the AGR program by the total number of pupils enrolled in a participating class. Under the expanded SAGE program created in this bill, DPI must pay \$2,250 for each pupil in a participating class. Under the bill, DPI must annually adjust the per pupil payment to reflect the percentage change in the consumer price index, if that change is positive. The repeal of the AGR takes effect immediately; the bill permits school boards to enter into contracts under the expanded SAGE program in the 2017–18 school year.

Also under this bill, beginning in the 2017–18 school year, no private school may participate in a choice program unless the school was participating in the program in the 2016–17 school year. Also under the bill, no pupil may attend a private school under a choice program unless the pupil was attending that private school under the program in the 2016–17 school year.

*If you would like to co-sponsor LRB-2144, please contact Representative Brostoff's Office at 266-0650 / [Rep.Brostoff@legis.wi.gov](mailto:Rep.Brostoff@legis.wi.gov) by 5pm on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*