



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Date: May 18, 2011

To: Members, Joint Committee on Finance

From: Survival Coalition Co-Chairs
Lynn Breedlove, Disability Rights Wisconsin
Maureen Ryan, Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers, Inc.
Beth Swedeen, WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

Subject: Executive Action on 2011-13 Biennial Budget– Education Funding

PUBLIC INSTRUCTION – GENERAL SCHOOL AIDS AND REVENUE LIMITS

State Support for K-12 Education, General School Aids, and Revenue Limits - Base Reduction (Paper #525); Special Adjustment Aid (Paper #526); Low Revenue Adjustment (Paper #528); Revenue Limit for School Safety Expenditures, Above-Average Transportation Costs, and School Nurse Compensation Costs (Paper #530)

Requested Action: In lieu of alternatives presented in papers #525, #526, #528 and #530, we strongly urge the Committee to adopt DPI's Fair Funding proposal and specifically maintain reimbursement levels for special education categorical aid and high cost special education categorical aid.

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations representing more than 40 member groups urges the Joint Committee on Finance to reallocate revenues to restore the Governor's GPR reductions to general school aids and the 10% cuts to High Poverty Aid over the 2011-13 biennium, as well as restore per pupil revenue limits.

This recommendation reinforces the education funding proposal outlined by the Department of Public Instruction in their May 18 memo to the committee. As DPI requests, in lieu of action on any of the alternatives put forward in Legislative Fiscal Bureau papers #525, #526, #528, and #530, the Survival Coalition endorses implementation of DPI's "Fair Funding for Our Future" school finance reform package.

Specifically, the Fair Funding request includes the increased allocation necessary to maintain the current (FY11) reimbursement levels in the high need areas of Special Education and High Cost

Special Education, which are important to allow districts to provide a federally required Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with disabilities.

DPI's estimates show that without this additional funding, the reimbursement rate will continue to decline as special education costs increase. Maintaining the same level of categorical aid, while special education costs continue to rise, effectively shifts the funding source for special education programs to general aids and property taxes.

In addition, maintaining the reimbursement rates for high cost special education students supports districts who are educating our most vulnerable children. Children with severe disabilities often need costly nursing services and assistive technology, expenses that are currently not eligible for reimbursement under the special education categorical aid appropriation. These services can cost three or more times the average expense for educating a pupil. The department's High Cost Special Education Categorical Aid fund assists school districts in educating these students.

Requested Action We understand that our proposal is a significant departure from the governor's budget and the options referenced in the fiscal bureau papers. However, we suggest that if the committee is interested in supporting students with disabilities in public schools, in addition to maintaining categorical aid levels, the committee should also vote to keep revenue limits at the most flexible level for local districts and choose the least harmful option as noted in Paper #525.

The Survival Coalition is comprised of over 40 statewide groups representing people with all disabilities and all ages, their family members, advocates and providers of disability services. For over 20 years Survival has been at the forefront of promoting cost effective, community- based services and supports for people with disabilities.

For Further Information Contact:

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