



# Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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*P.O. Box 7222, Madison, Wisconsin 53707*

March 3, 2015

## **Survival Coalition Supports Increases in Funding for Students with Disabilities to Address Achievement Gap**

Today before the Legislature's budget committee the Department of Public Instruction laid out the harsh realities for students across Wisconsin who are struggling to achieve with limited increases in funding. Specifically, Superintendent Evers said this about students with disabilities:

“Unfortunately, our school districts continue to shoulder the majority of special education costs. There is no additional special education funding in this budget. Special education categorical aid was reimbursed at just 27 cents on the dollar in 2013-14.

We must do more to serve all our students and ensure the next generation is prepared to contribute to our great state. It's hard to hold schools to account when this budget doesn't provide them with the resources to get the job done.”

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations agrees that the state can do more to help students with disabilities.

More than 120,000 students have disabilities in Wisconsin – about 12% of a typical school's population. Research shows that with supports students with disabilities can learn and reach academic proficiency just like students without disabilities.

Unfortunately achievement of students with disabilities lags behind other groups. Twenty years of eroded funding has taken a toll on districts' ability to realize high expectations for this population.

Department of Public Instruction data shows:

- Students with disabilities are 2.5 times less likely to be proficient in reading and math than their peers.
- More than 1/3 of students with cognitive or emotional and behavioral disabilities and nearly 1/4 of students with autism reported never being employed or enrolled in school/training one year after graduation.
- 92% of youth ages 18-21 who receive Medicaid-funded long-term care are not employed.

**The state's share of special education funding has eroded from 44% to 26% over the last 20 years with no increase in 8 years.**

The Survival Coalition respectfully requests that the Joint Finance Committee look to seriously address underfunding issues for students with disabilities and all students.

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.

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*Survival Coalition Issue Teams: education, employment, housing, long term care for adults, long term care for children, mental health, transportation, workforce, voting, Medicaid and health care.*

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Investing in People with Disabilities