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## **Wisconsin Parents: Assembly Education Plan Hurts Kids, Betrays Promise**

*Parents, community members outraged by stalled K-12 budget discussions*

SUN PRAIRIE. With K-12 public education funding discussions [stalled](#) as Assembly Republicans balk at the Governor's plan to restore a fraction of the funding lost to public schools, public education advocates are expressing outrage and calling on lawmakers to do what's best for Wisconsin children.

After a massive outpouring of support for public education funding at each of the six Joint Finance Committee hearings, parents all over the state are sharing their frustration with what they say is a "failure to listen to the people" on the part of Assembly Republicans, who unveiled a [plan](#) today that would cut \$90 million from the Governor's K-12 education budget.

"It is reprehensible, not to mention totally tone deaf, to ignore the pleas for resources from superintendents, boards, parents, teachers and students from across our state," said **Jenni Hofschulte** of **Parents for Public Schools in Milwaukee**. "Who is asking for these cuts? I demand to know, *who*, outside of legislature, thinks less is better for our schools? Because I am in our public schools nearly every day and *less* is not what they need."

"I can't believe we're having this conversation at the final hour of budget negotiations," said **Marcia Engen**, a member of **Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education**. "'Restore funding to public schools' was the number one thing legislators heard at the public hearings on the budget. All over the state, there was one common message no matter what district you were from: the \$200 per student funding promised by the Governor was barely enough to keep most districts afloat. Senate Republicans clearly got the message, but now the Assembly majority wants to break that promise? Most districts have already drafted their budgets, and many are looking at deep cuts *with* the proposed \$200. We can't afford to cut even more than we already have. Our kids are counting on us to keep that promise. We can't afford not to."

**Sandy Whisler** of **Citizen Advocates for Public Education** in Lake Mills shared that concern. "I don't understand where this new proposal is coming from. We could not have spoken more loudly or more clearly. What part of 'restore education funding' didn't the Assembly Republicans understand? What part of 'put kids first' was unclear to them?"

"Do they really think we can't see through this smoke and mirrors? No matter how you spin it, taking \$90 million away from kids does not put more money in the classroom. It's a cut."

**Schools and Communities United**, a coalition of public school advocates from Milwaukee, put out this statement: "Voters from across the state of Wisconsin have made their demands for modest investment in our children's public schools: \$200 per Wisconsin pupil is the bare bones minimum required to educate our children. Now Assembly Republicans want to take money away from Wisconsin children again by sabotaging their public schools, the only schools that welcome and serve every child. Schools and Communities United stands with families, parents, community members and voters across Wisconsin that will accept nothing less than \$200 per pupil for the Wisconsin 2017-19 budget."

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While communities are outraged over the cuts proposed by the Assembly Republicans, advocates remain optimistic that their message will be heard. “I’m glad that the Senate Republicans are holding the line on this issue and are [committed](#) to keeping the Governor’s promise to our kids,” said **Donna Pahuski** of **Cambridge**. “Anything less than \$200/student would be a huge cut to our districts, and I think most legislators are finally starting to see that, thanks to the strong testimony on the budget around the state this year.”

Public school advocates are calling on Republicans and Democrats alike to fully support public schools with both their words and their actions. Many Assembly Republicans have been saying throughout the budget cycle that they support the Governor’s proposal, and constituents are watching to make sure they vote accordingly.

“I love that we’re finally hearing Republicans make strong commitments to our public schools. This is great, especially after years of cuts,” said former school board member **Mary Ellen Havel-Lang** of **Support Sun Prairie Schools**. “But I worry that this is more politics as usual, especially after today’s shell game of a press conference from the Assembly Republicans. I love that we’re finally talking about raising the low revenue limit ceiling. Districts have been asking for this for years. But raising that limit is like raising the limit on a credit card. Having ‘permission’ to spend more money is not the same as having the money to spend. Assembly Republicans need to make investments with dollars, not just words. If we really want our schools to thrive, we’ll increase the per pupil aid to at least \$200/student, as promised by the Governor, *and* we’ll raise the low revenue limit ceiling.”

**Jessica Wiczorek** of the **Dodger Network (Dodgeville)** and **Action Iowa County** agrees. “It’s not an *either/or*. It’s ‘Yes, let’s fix the broken funding formula’ and ‘*Yes, let’s fully fund our schools.*’ We’ve got enough money in this budget to provide funding for all the other things we know our schools need most: mental health services, high cost transportation and rural sparsity aid, special education funding.”

As the Assembly and Senate Republicans seem deadlocked for the moment on the K-12 budget, Wisconsin advocates are asking: *Why?*

“I’m so tired of hearing politicians claim they are champions for public schools and then moments later, announce less funding for our kids,” said **Stacy Racine Lynch**, **Support Our Schools (SOS) Wauwatosa**. “The Assembly wants to cut Governor Walker’s K-12 budget by \$90 million. In Wauwatosa, we’d see \$300,000 in cuts in revenue cap aid - \$300,000 less to innovate schools and educate our children.”

**Bob Wright** of **Saint Croix Valley Friends of Public Education** adds: “\$200 is a great start to restoring funding, but it’s not nearly enough. Our schools are **\$2.6 billion** below 2009 funding. Let’s have some perspective here.”

“It’s hard to believe lawmakers are putting forward unvetted ‘alternatives’ at this final hour when Superintendent Tony Evers’ [original budget proposal](#) was fair to all students and met our most urgent needs. If we want to lower the revenue limit ceiling, let’s give schools what they really need - aid that’s distributed through a revenue limit increase and not just as per-pupil aid. It’s not that complicated. Just do what’s fair.”

“For too long, children have been pawns in political games. We’ve had enough. How can you say you’re putting kids first when you put education last in the budget process? Our kids were promised a fair share of the pie this year, and now we’re watching legislators bicker over the crumbs. It’s not right.”

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