



**MILWAUKEE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

MEDIA CONTACT

MPS Department of Communications
Stephen Davis, Media Relations Manager

Phone: 414-475-8650

Email: comm@milwaukee.k12.wi.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WISCONSIN'S FIVE LARGEST SCHOOL DISTRICTS URGE LAWMAKERS TO RETURN TO TABLE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING

Wisconsin's special education funding system is broken – and the compromise proposed by Governor Evers and Republican leadership represented meaningful progress. We urge the Governor and the Legislature to return to the table to address the continued underfunding of special education. Failure to approve a bipartisan plan will result in real harm, not just for students with disabilities, but for all public school students statewide.

For many school districts, it will be the difference in maintaining student programming and retaining highly qualified staff next school year. However, even if additional special education funding is approved, many districts will still face significant budget deficits and continued financial strain.

Following the state's failure to uphold its original special education reimbursement commitments, the pledge in the compromise plan ([Assembly Bill 1](#)) to reimburse 42% of special education costs for the 2025-26 school year and 50% in 2026-27 is a step in the right direction. Each year that Wisconsin fails to adequately fund the education of students with disabilities, it forces public school districts statewide to divert their limited general funds to cover underfunded special education costs. In 2022, the Education Law Center estimated these funded costs at \$1.25 billion statewide.

The bipartisan agreement also acknowledges another significant challenge: Without new general aid in the state budget, growing school costs have increasingly been shifted directly to property taxpayers. At a time when Wisconsin residents are already navigating rising costs of living, reducing the tax burden would provide much-needed relief—especially for seniors on fixed incomes.

These solutions are, by design, a compromise. They do not fix Wisconsin's long-standing, broken school-funding system. But they do provide desperately needed resources to help public schools continue meeting the needs of students, families, and communities across our state.

We remain committed to working with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to build a sustainable, long-term funding system that ensures every child in Wisconsin has access to a high-quality public education. In the meantime, we urge them to return to the table and work together to support those who will be harmed the most without action: our students, families and communities.

Vicki Bayer, Superintendent, Green Bay Area Public School District
Brenda Cassellius, EdD, Superintendent, Milwaukee Public Schools
Soren Gajewski, Superintendent, Racine Unified School District
Joe Gothard, EdD, Superintendent, Madison Metropolitan School District
Jeff Weiss, EdD, Superintendent, Kenosha Unified School District

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Milwaukee Public Schools
5225 W. Vliet Street
Milwaukee, WI 53208
(414) 475-8001 • mpsmke.com



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