

Republicans Break Promise to Public Schools, Push Last-Minute \$14 Million Cut

Written by Wisconsin Assembly Democrats
Tuesday, 16 February 2016 10:26 -



MADISON - The State Assembly is set to ram through a last-minute change (AB 751) to the school funding formula today that will cut another \$14 million in revenue limit authority from public schools in the 2016-17 school year. The change, which breaks a major promise that Republicans made to schools, is being pushed by special interest groups to appease far-right wing activists.



“Republicans cannot be trusted to do what’s right for our kids and our schools and these cuts will harm our already-starving public schools,” Assembly Democratic Leader **Peter Barca** (D-Kenosha) said. “The people of Wisconsin overwhelmingly agree we are investing too little in our schools and yet legislative Republicans continue to break their promises to our schools. Many education leaders have spoken out against this change. I hope that Republican legislators will side with the children and schools in their districts – not with their party bosses and special interests.”

According to the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB), Republicans have cut more than [\\$1 billion in state aid from public K-12 schools since 2011](#)

. The latest state budget also featured an unprecedented giveaway that harms local school districts by taking taxpayer funds directly from public schools to subsidize private school vouchers. The LFB estimates this change will divert up to \$800 million from public schools to private schools over the next decade.



“Democrats stand united in support of our public schools,” said Senate Democratic Leader **Jennifer Shilling** (D-La Crosse). “Local taxpayers can’t afford to continue subsidizing an alternative school system that isn’t accountable to the public. We need to support our local community schools and ensure that every child has access to a quality public education.”

The latest Marquette Law poll found that 57 percent of voters believe our public schools are

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already receiving too little state support. Despite their unpopularity, legislative Republicans continue to push forward anti-public school policies to appease the pro-voucher lobbying interests who are bankrolling their campaigns.

During the state budget, Republican lawmakers promised that voucher students “would be fully counted by their school district of residence under revenue limits in the first year” (JFC motion #457). Under the new Republican proposal, public school districts will subsidize the cost for every new student enrolled in the voucher program for the first two years of their participation – a number that could face explosive growth as the voucher enrollment caps phase out over the coming years. For example, in year one, aid to the Appleton Area School District will be slashed by more than \$587,000, La Crosse School District will lose more than \$228,000 and Sheboygan Area School District will lose \$381,000. Without the ability to ask their local taxpayers to make up those losses, opportunities will be taken away from public school students.

An LFB memo on the potential cuts to school districts under Assembly Bill 751 is [available here](#).

Legislative staffers Tony Palese and Laura Smith contributed to this story.