

## Budget Makes Critical Investments in Public Schools

Written by LaTonya Johnson Press  
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***Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor puts children's future and the needs of local schools first to members of Joint Finance Committee says Johnson.***

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MADISON - What zip code a child lives in should not determine what opportunities they are provided. Today, we heard from State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor who gave members of the Joint Finance Committee a chance to ask questions about the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) provisions included in the state budget.

After years of underfunding from Republican lawmakers, the governor has put our children's future and the needs of our local schools first. We know that the people of Wisconsin, from every corner of the state, have been asking for a greater investment in our public schools. Under Walker, local taxpayers have voted in favor for \$1.4 billion in referenda funding to support their schools.



Through the years, special education support to local schools has not kept up with the needs of our children. In fact, Wisconsin provides the lowest reimbursement rate for special education in the nation. The governor invests over \$600 million in special education, bringing state support for these critical state programs up to 60% by the end of the biennium. This investment supports our Wisconsin value that every child in our state should have access to a high-quality education.

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Another significant investment the governor makes in his state budget proposal is in mental health care for students. According to DPI, one in five students face a mental health issue and 80% of mental health incidents go untreated. For those who do receive treatment, roughly 70% of the time it is administered at school. For these reasons, I am happy to see roughly \$64 million go to mental health services for students in the state budget. This includes ensuring schools are supported in their ability to hire critical health and safety staff, such as social workers and nurses.

The Evers administration worked hard to listen to the needs and values of Wisconsinites, and that is exactly what is reflected in his state budget. I look forward to continuing this budget process in a positive, bipartisan way to ensure the People's Budget lands on the governor's desk for his signature into law.

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Statement from State Senator LaTonya Johnson regarding Wednesday's agency briefings in the Joint Finance Committee on Governor Tony Evers' 2019-2021 state budget.