

## **Wisconsin Kids and Communities Deserve Better; JFC Should Support Increased Funding for Special Education and School-Based Mental Health Grants**

**For Immediate Release:** June 11, 2025

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As the Joint Committee on Finance of the Wisconsin State Legislature convenes tomorrow to make decisions on education funding for Wisconsin's children, **Disability Rights Wisconsin asks the Committee to move Wisconsin from our dismal place as the second worst in the country for special education funding and provide funding for a 60 percent special education reimbursement rate at minimum.**

Only 30.64% of the current school year's disability-related school funding needs will be covered by the State. **The impacts of a lack of funding are significant.**

**When there is not enough funding:**

- class sizes go up,
- teachers are pulled in too many directions to address students' needs,
- districts struggle to hire qualified teachers and aides,
- local levies must cover gaps in education funding of more than \$1.25 billion statewide every year, leading to a record number of local funding referendums, and
- **students with disabilities get under-supported, resented, blamed, and expelled in increasing numbers.**

**In addition to supports for special education, the Committee should also provide a significant increase in funding for school-based mental health grants.** The mental health needs of students across Wisconsin are well-documented, and significant investment is needed to ensure Wisconsin's schools can support the students they serve in a meaningful and impactful way. DRW

encourages the Committee to support \$167 million in investment over the biennium into the mental health of Wisconsin's youth through school-based mental health grants.

Half a century ago, Wisconsin led the country in promising public education to ALL our students. Now in 2025, the legislature has fallen shockingly short when it comes to funding that promise. This is not the fault of our kids and their needs; this is an ongoing failure on the part of the state to meet the promise. **The Joint Committee on Finance has the chance to do the right thing for Wisconsin's kids.**