



**Disability
Rights**
WISCONSIN

Press Release:

DRW Statement on Introduction of AB 859 and SB 852

For Immediate Release: January 21, 2026

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Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) applauds the introduction of AB 859 and SB 852, which would provide sum-sufficient funding to reach the special education reimbursement levels set in the current state budget. The state budget set reimbursement rates for special education at 42 percent of school district costs for 2025-26 and 45 percent for 2026-27 but because of how the appropriation was made, the effective reimbursement rate will only be 35 percent for at least November through March. AB 859 and SB 852 would provide the funding needed to meet the rates as established by the legislature in the 2025-27 Wisconsin state budget.

Providing funding to meet the reimbursement rates as established in the state budget is necessary, and still far below what is needed to adequately support students with disabilities and school districts. **A reimbursement rate of 45 percent for special education funding still holds Wisconsin's rate as the second worst in the nation.** As Jill Jacklitz, Executive Director of DRW, stated during the 2025-27 state budget negotiations, "Wisconsin students with disabilities deserve investment in their education, and Wisconsin school districts and communities deserve adequate funding to support special education — and all — students." Disability Rights Wisconsin continues to advocate for a minimum reimbursement rate for special education funding of 90 percent, which would bring us in line with reimbursement rates of other states across the country.

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Serving the state of Wisconsin with offices in Madison and Milwaukee.

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.**

The Wisconsin State Legislature should take immediate action to meet its established reimbursement rates for special education in the 2025-27 state budget, and proactively work to ensure Wisconsin moves from one of the worst to the best at ensuring the needs of ALL Wisconsin kids, communities, and schools are met.

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is a statewide private non-profit organization with a mission to advance the dignity, equality, and self-determination of people with disabilities. DRW serves as the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin, charged with protecting the rights of children and adults with disabilities and keeping them free from abuse and neglect.