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The Arc Wisconsin Supports Essential Increase in Funding for Students with Disabilities

As the Legislature's Joint Finance budget Committee meets this Thursday to determine the state's education budget, The Arc Wisconsin, a leading statewide organization advocating for people with disabilities and families pleads for necessary support for students with disabilities.

Specifically, it is time for the state to be a better partner with local school districts and fund at least one-half of special education costs.

Wisconsin public schools educate nearly 855,000 students; among those students, 14% or about 102,350 have disabilities and qualify for special education services. Families of children with disabilities have been hit particularly hard in the pandemic as children have been more isolated and have lost skills and relationships.

In a recent Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations survey 3 in 4 parents reported skill regression in their children and anticipated a need for additional behavioral or mental health supports. These needs come on top of chronic underfunding of special education as costs rise and local districts struggle to fill in gaps left by the state's lack of commitment.

The Arc Wisconsin along with key education stakeholder groups, disability advocacy organizations and families support the Governor's proposal and the Department of Public Instruction's original request to fund special education at 45% in year one of the next biennial budget, and 50% in the second year.

The Arc Wisconsin advocates for and serves people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), including Down syndrome, autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, cerebral palsy and other diagnoses. The Arc Wisconsin has 14 local chapters and is connected to a network of more than 600 chapters across the country promoting and protecting the human rights of people with I/DD and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes and without regard to diagnosis.

Editor's Note: The Arc is not an acronym; always refer to us as The Arc, not The ARC and never ARC. The Arc should be considered as a title or a phrase.