



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

P.O. Box 7222, Madison, Wisconsin 53707

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Co-Chairs:

Beth Swedeen, (608) 220-2924; beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov

Lisa Pugh, (608) 469-9385; pugh@thearc.org

Kristin Kerschensteiner, (608) 267-0214; kitk@drwi.org

SURVIVAL COALITION DISAPPOINTED IN JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE VOTE; LACK OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

(MADISON) – Families and advocates for students with disabilities are extremely disappointed by the decisions made on party-line vote by the legislature’s Joint Finance Committee (JFC), ignoring the tremendous and increasing needs of children with disabilities.

Special education students and their families were struggling to get the supports they needed before COVID. The pandemic has made everything harder, and parents have watched academic and social skills erode. It is likely many of these students will need ongoing support to regain lost ground. An overwhelming majority of those who testified on the education budget requested that the state reach a special education cost reimbursement rate of 50%.

The JFC decision to only reimburse special education costs to 30% also does not guarantee that special education funding will be sum-sufficient (in other words, not ensuring there even will be enough funding to actually reach 30%). The legislature made the same 30% reimbursement commitment in the last budget, and it was never met.

A modest increase to reimburse schools for 30% of special education costs and the Joint Finance Committee’s neglect of youth transition funding does not match the increased needs of the students and families who now require the most help to be ready for the workforce and adulthood.

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations released a survey from 300 Wisconsin families earlier this year:

<http://www.survivalcoalitionwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/survey-2021-Spec-edu.pdf>

Among the results:

- 9 in 10 families report a negative change in special education services.
- 3 in 4 families expect their child to experience skill regression.
- 2 in 3 expect or are experiencing increased behavior challenges.
- Over 2 in 3 say they expect their child to lose friendships and critical social connections.

Survival Coalition still supports increasing the state funding of special education to 50 percent. We hope the legislature will remember the needs of student and reconsider before final budget votes.

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 20 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.

Survival Coalition Issue Teams: education, employment, housing, long term care for adults, long term care for children, mental health, transportation, workforce, voting, Medicaid and health care.

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