

This budget is wrong for Wisconsin – An overview

What's at Stake: Governor Walker's state budget is wrong for Wisconsin and goes against what we value. The crushing cuts proposed will undermine the quality of our schools. You simply cannot cut nearly \$1 billion out of our education system and deliver on the promise to provide children with a quality education. The depth of these cuts is mind-blowing, and will result in massive teacher layoffs and increased class sizes. This budget will lead to the elimination of programs like sports, arts, music, electives, science education and Advanced Placement. Every parent, grandparent and citizen who cares about Wisconsin's schools and future should be alarmed at this plan to dismantle our public schools. We cannot stand on the sidelines and watch this destruction – Wisconsin's future is at stake.

The Walker budget cuts to schools will hurt students.

- ✓ Teacher layoffs will lead to increased class sizes and eliminate programs.
- ✓ Funding for Advanced Placement, science and technology education will be eliminated.
- ✓ At the same time the governor says he wants to improve third grade reading, he is eliminating the requirement that schools have reading specialists to teach them.
- ✓ At-risk students will lose out, as programs to help them graduate high school are ended.
- ✓ Funding for alcohol and drug prevention, which helps children make smart choices, is cut.
- ✓ Schools will no longer be required to create plans to ensure indoor air quality so students and staff are assured a safe place to learn and work free from mold and other air contaminants.

These cuts will be felt far beyond the schoolhouse doors – they will impact our communities.

- ✓ Without those things that build the fabric of a community – athletic events, fine arts productions, outreach between teens and senior citizens and more – our hometowns will be missing a critical piece of their identities.

This undermines our education tradition. Leaders should be moving our schools forward, not back.

- ✓ The governor wants to privatize education, so corporations can profit off of our schools.
- ✓ At the same time he is cutting nearly \$1 billion from our public schools, he favors opening up the private school voucher program to wealthy families, so they can send their kids to private schools on the taxpayers' dime.
- ✓ We are Wisconsin. We believe in the promise of a better tomorrow. We can get through these tough economic times and achieve a balanced state budget without destroying all that we value in this state – excellent public schools, quality public services, and opportunities for all.
- ✓ Please work across party lines to find sensible budget solutions that reflect the traditions and values of Wisconsin. This is our future - this is Wisconsin's future.

TIPS ON TESTIMONY

- Arrive early to register (you may have to wait several hours) & plan for 2 minutes of testimony.
- Keep it real. Talk about how cuts to education will affect kids in your school & their futures.
- Emphasize your role as an educator, taxpayer, community member, parent, etc.

Overview of Governor Walker's Education Budget

Cuts to Public Education

- Cuts \$1.68 billion in maximum allowable revenue for school districts statewide compared to current law
- Cuts \$834 million in state aid to school districts – the largest cut to public education in the state's history
- Eliminates funding for the following categorical aid programs:
 - Aid for children at risk grants
 - Alternative education grants
 - Grants for advanced placement courses
 - Grants for alcohol and other drug abuse prevention and intervention programs
 - Grants for nursing services
 - Grants for science technology, engineering and math
 - Grants for improving academic achievement (Milwaukee Public Schools)
 - Grants for preschool to grade 5 class-size reduction program (Milwaukee, Kenosha, Racine, Beloit)
- Cuts categorical aid funding for the following by 10%:
 - 4K start-up grants
 - Bilingual-bicultural
 - Gifted and talented grants
 - Head Start supplement
 - School breakfast grants
 - School day milk
 - Sparsity aid
 - Pupil transportation

Move towards privatization of public education

- Expands the Milwaukee private school voucher program, draining resources from Milwaukee Public Schools, leading to higher property taxes. Phases out income eligibility for the program, allowing the wealthy in Milwaukee to send their kids to private schools in Milwaukee County with a taxpayer-supported voucher. Eliminates the requirement that students in the voucher program take the same standardized tests that all other students supported by public dollars take.
- Expands the independent 2r charter school program, disconnected from a local school board and siphoning off resources from traditional public schools statewide as a first draw on general school aid – a sum-sufficient appropriation that essentially amounts to a blank check.
- Allows independent 2r charter schools to hire unlicensed teachers, just as it is with voucher schools.
- At a time when Governor Walker is slashing resources for our traditional public schools, he is infusing an additional \$18.4 million in the voucher program and \$22.5 million in the independent 2r charter school program.

Higher Education

- Cuts state funding for technical colleges by more than \$70 million, jeopardizing the state's ability to provide a well-trained workforce and ultimately harming economic prosperity. Freezes technical colleges' levy limit, takes away local control.
- Freezes higher education financial aid grants despite predicted steep tuition hikes.
- Breaks Wisconsin's covenant with school children by prohibiting new students from enrolling in the program after September 30, 2011, closing off a pathway to help students afford a higher education if they honor their commitment to good grades and community service.

State – Juvenile Correctional Institutions

- Closes Ethan Allen School for boys and consolidates operations at Lincoln Hills School, placing a strain on Milwaukee area families who would be forced to travel long distances to maintain family connections, a key part of rehabilitation.
- Closes Southern Oaks Girls School and relocates the girls to Copper Lake School for Girls on the grounds of the Lincoln Hills School for boys, raising safety concerns.

Outline for Preparing Testimony

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Finance:

My name is _____ and I am Wisconsin. I am a _____ and I live in _____ . I am opposed to Governor Walker's 2011-13 state budget proposal.

The unprecedented cuts to public education will be devastating. Here is what I believe these cuts will mean for students, my community and our state:

This budget is not about shared sacrifice. It only asks some of us to sacrifice. Balancing the budget on the backs of the middle class while giving away tax breaks to corporations and the wealthy is unfair. Here is why:

We are Wisconsin. We can get through these tough economic times and achieve a balanced state budget without destroying all that we value in this state – excellent public schools, quality public services, and opportunities for all.

Sincerely,

Name

Address