



WAUWATOSA SCHOOL DISTRICT

• Your Educational Community •

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND RESIDENTS

WHY SHOULD WE ASK OUR STATE LEGISLATORS TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION?

Execute the district's strategic plan. Every decision we make as a school district is aligned to our strategic plan. Limited resources are used by the district to:

- Drive continuous improvement in student learning
- Recruit, retain and inspire highly effective teachers and staff
- Maintain a strong bond rating and avoid short-term borrowing to meet day-to-day expenses
- Build strong community relationships that benefit students

A comprehensive, predictable and sustainable funding system could allow the school district to address more strategic priorities each year.

Keep local property taxes low. The Wauwatosa School District is funded mostly by local property taxes and state aid. When state aid increases, local school districts are better positioned to maintain or even reduce local property taxes.

WHAT SOLUTIONS SHOULD WE ADVOCATE FOR LEGISLATORS TO CONSIDER?

Increase the revenue cap and revenue cap aid or equalized aid by \$350 per pupil. A school district's revenue cap determines how much a school district can spend each year. A \$200 per pupil increase – equaling \$1.2 million in state funding - would help the District maintain "status quo" and manage the impacts of inflation on health care, wages, and school equipment. Over the last two decades, Wauwatosa School District spending hasn't even kept up with the rate of U.S. inflation. A \$350 per pupil increase would allow the District to keep up with inflation and give appropriate salary increases in order to retain and hire top teaching talent. We need to build a sustainable career field for the short and long term and improving salaries is essential.

Increase the reimbursement rate for special education services to 90%. Currently, school districts are federally mandated to fund the educational costs associated with implementing Individual Educational Programs (IEPs). To meet the mandate, districts must use general fund dollars to pay for the special education programs, thus cutting funding available for other education programs serving all students. About 30 years ago, state statute required that 60% of special education costs would be covered by state funding. Today, the state reimburses merely 26% of special education costs. Meanwhile, the state reimburses private school special

education vouchers at a 90% rate. Aligning the special education reimbursement rates of public and private schools would create a level playing field and serve all students.

Revise the definition of “shared cost” to exclude any building or building maintenance debt service costs. Currently, 116 districts across Wisconsin, including Wauwatosa, pay a “negative aid” penalty if they pass a school facility referendum. This means that a school district would need to levy taxes to cover the cost of the construction, the interest of the bonds, AND the “negative aid” penalty. We believe that all school children deserve safe, accessible buildings and that no community should be penalized for investing in their school facilities. We agree with the state’s Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding, which called on the legislature to address the issue of negative tertiary aid.

Increase state support to ensure adequate resources for mental health. Unmet mental health needs affect children and their ability to do their best in school. Today, school districts are utilizing general funds to support mental health needs for their students. We support the state’s Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding recommendation to, “Create a new categorical aid for mental health services, with payments calculated in a manner similar to per-pupil aid under current law.” Predictable, sustainable mental health funding (instead of one-time grant funding) would enable the district to hire additional social workers, therapists/psychologists, counselors, and more to serve the mental health needs of our students.

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS TO ASK FOR AN INCREASE IN FUNDING:

Governor Tony Evers

Email: GovInfo@wisconsin.gov
Madison Office Phone: 608-266-1212

Senate District 4: Senator Lena Taylor

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Senate District 5: Senator Dale Kooyenga

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Madison Office Phone: 608-266-2512
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**Assembly District 12: Representative
LaKeshia Myers**

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**Assembly District 13: Representative
Rob Hutton**

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**Assembly District 14: Representative
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