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Joint Finance Committee Testimony Excerpts

March 3, 2015 — Hearing on the 2015-17 Biennial Budget Bill

By State Superintendent Tony Evers

I, like many of you, have a personal stake in this: what happens with public education in this budget directly impacts my grandchildren. I urge you to keep our children in mind as you craft your budget priorities this time around.

We have to prioritize our 870,000 public school students if we want to offer a quality education to the next generation.

Again, I ask you to change this budget proposal.

- There is no per pupil revenue limit increase in this budget.
- There is no increase in general school aids in the first year.

In fact, there is a cut to schools in the first year with the elimination of the per pupil categorical aid.

This is an unsustainable path. We can't eliminate achievement gaps, turn around struggling schools, increase technical course offerings, or address the increasing need to support our students without additional aids and spending authority.

I support school accountability, but oppose the path laid out in this budget. Central to accountability is transparency and public trust. There are a lot of moving parts to this discussion, so I want to take this opportunity to lay out my principles.

- *All students who receive public funding must take the same assessment.* Simply put: we need an apples-to-apples comparison so we understand what is working for our students.
- *Assessments must be administered annually* so individual student growth and progress on eliminating achievement gaps can be highlighted and monitored.
- *Assessments should be seen as shining a light on student achievement and support student learning.* They should not be used as a hammer to undercut improvement efforts that are already underway or to threaten schools and districts that need support.
- *Grades should be avoided.* Anyone whose child brought home a report card knows that a C does not equate to "meeting expectations." The analogy from student grading to the school report cards just doesn't work.

A sound public education is the foundation of our economic engine. The budget, as proposed, continues the recent legacy of less for my grandchildren, your children and grandchildren, and the next generation of our great state. Changes must be made.

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Tony Evers is Wisconsin's elected state superintendent of public instruction. A copy of the full testimony to the Joint Committee on Finance can be found on the department's Budget News and Resources webpage
<http://dpi.wi.gov/budget/news-resources>.