

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WHITEFISH BAY

SCHOOL BOARD

1200 EAST FAIRMOUNT AVENUE
WHITEFISH BAY, WI 53217
TEL: (414) 963-3921
FAX: (414) 963-3959

The Whitefish Bay School District



September 4, 2018

Dear Legislator:

As we begin the 2018-2019 school year, the School Board of the School District of Whitefish Bay wishes to bring to your attention the serious underfunding of special education in Wisconsin public schools. Our school district is committed to providing a first-rate education for all students, which means -- in the context of special education -- that our district devotes significant amounts of our revenue to special education teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, as well as counselors. In this year's budget, our district will increase special education spending by \$200,850 to meet our students' needs.

Unfortunately, the district's reimbursement rate from the State of Wisconsin is well below the level necessary to cover these required special education costs. The State of Wisconsin has not increased public school special education categorical aid funding since 2010-2011. Further, while the State has statutory language that seems to require that it fund over 60% of costs related to special education, in 2017-2018 the State funded only 25.67% of special education costs in public schools. With the legislature's passage of the last biennial budget, this underfunding problem for special education in public schools has only worsened. Now, special needs vouchers in private schools are reimbursed at a rate of 90% while public schools are estimated to be reimbursed at a rate of 24.50% in 2018-2019.

For these reasons, the School Board for the School District of Whitefish Bay urges you, as our legislator, to increase reimbursement for special education in public schools to a rate that matches the 90% reimbursement provided to private schools through the legislated Special Needs Scholarship Program, and thus ensures that our district, as well as others throughout the State, can continue to have the funds needed to make a difference in the lives of all our students, including our special education students.

Thank you for your consideration and action on our behalf.

Sincerely,

Anne Berleman Kearney

Anne Berleman Kearney

President of The School Board for the School District of Whitefish Bay

On Behalf of all Board Members:

Kristin Bencik Boudreau

Douglas Armstrong

Pamela Woodard

W. Brett Christiansen

Kristin Yunker

Sandy Saltzstein