



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BARABOO

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Baraboo, WI 53913
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RESOLUTION in Support of Increasing Special Education Funding in Wisconsin Public Schools to 100% of the Costs Incurred

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the 421 local Wisconsin public school districts to support the educational needs of all students, including those who are differently abled; and

WHEREAS, the federal government, through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), promised over 40 years ago to fund 40% of the costs of supporting students with special needs, but funds merely 12% in the State of Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin promised in 1973 to reimburse 70% of a school district's costs toward special education, (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973), but will fund a mere 26% in 2019-20 and 30% in 2020-21; and

WHEREAS, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau recently concluded that because of the historic underfunding by the state and federal governments, public school districts have had to fund \$61.1 million dollars over the past 10 years to cover the educational costs associated with implementing Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) for students with special needs (Legislative Fiscal Bureau, memo March 13, 2019); and

WHEREAS, districts across Wisconsin must cut critical education programs and services for students in order to comply with the underfunded special education mandate; and

WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin has increased funding for public school special education categorical aid only marginally in the upcoming biennial budget despite the fact that actual costs have increased by more than 65% for more than a decade. Yet within the last five years the State of Wisconsin has increased funding for special education in private schools by enacting Wisconsin's Special Needs Scholarship Program (Wis. Stats. 115.7915 and Administrative Code PI-49), which provides scholarships in the form of school vouchers for students with special needs to attend private schools; and

WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin only reimburses Wisconsin public school districts for special needs students at a rate of 26% in 2019-20 and 30% in 2020-21, but reimburses private schools for special needs students at a rate of 90%; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin public school districts are mandated to serve every student with special needs, regardless of how extensive a student's special needs may be, but private

schools may choose whether or not to serve students with special needs at all, and the ones that do choose to serve students with special needs are permitted to refuse to serve any student whose special needs are deemed, in the sole discretion of the private school, too extensive. This has resulted in the students who have the most extensive special needs being served by Wisconsin's public schools, while private schools that serve special needs students tend to serve those who have mild to moderate special needs; yet private schools are reimbursed at a much higher rate than public schools, even though Wisconsin's public schools are serving the students whose special needs, being extensive, are the most costly; and

WHEREAS, even when a special needs student attends a private school on the Special Needs Scholarship Program voucher or any other school voucher program, the student's local public school district is required by law to continue serving that student, by providing special education teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, school psychologists, or other special education staff; and

WHEREAS, private schools, despite receiving far more funding per special needs student than public schools, are not required to have certified and/or licensed special education teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, school psychologists, or other special education staff; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin public schools are held accountable to Wisconsin taxpayers while private schools are not; and

WHEREAS, If State of Wisconsin funding for special education at public schools was increased to 60% as required by state statute and proposed by Governor Evers, and if public schools were also reimbursed for special needs student at the same 90% rate as private schools, special education at public schools could be fully funded; and

WHEREAS, because of the chronic underfunding of special education, the School District of Baraboo has had to do general fund transfers to the special education account, leaving us unable to meet the needs of all of our students. Furthermore, the amount of the general fund transfers required has been increasing as shown in the chart below:

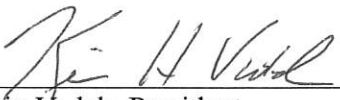
YEAR	DOLLARS
2014-15	\$3,535,890
2015-16	\$3,507,041
2016-17	\$3,771,441
2017-18	\$3,917,098
2018-19	\$3,835,396
* 2019-20	\$4,058,439

* 2020-21	\$4,076,370
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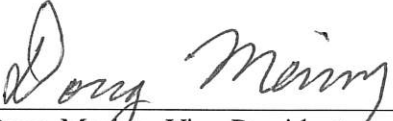
** Projections based off on June 2019 preliminary budget numbers*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the School District of Baraboo Board of Education calls on the Governor Tony Evers, the Wisconsin Assembly, and the Wisconsin Senate to increase special education funding for Wisconsin's public schools to 100% of the costs incurred, less the amount provided by the Federal Government.

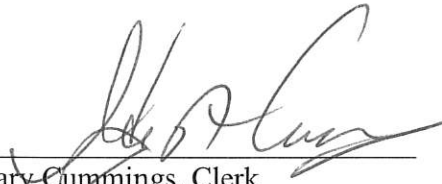
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, being all of the members of the School District of Baraboo Board of Education have executed this resolution the 12th day of August, 2019.




Kevin Vodak, President




Doug Mering, Vice-President




Gary Cummings, Clerk



Sean McNevin, Treasurer



Timothy Heilman, Member



Mike Kohlman, Member



Nancy Thome, Member

