http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/schoolyard-greenfield-s5.jpg

Legislative Fiscal Bureau memo shows General Aid siphoned off by voucher operators. Governor's budget would give from $7,757 to $8,403 per student to voucher schools by 2018, while public students would receive an average of $6,703.

MADISON – A new memo from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau shows that public schools and students continue to suffer while unaccountable voucher operators get first crack at taxpayer dollars. Payments to voucher operators under the Governor's budget proposal would be at least $1000 higher per student than the average for public school students, legislative Democratic leaders pointed out. General Aid to public schools would remain below 2010 levels because of diversions to voucher and private charter schools.



"Last month I talked about the new budget as a drop in a bucket that has a hole in it. This is the hole in the bucket," Sen. **Janet Bewley** (D-Delta) said. "Even as property taxpayers and the families of more than 850 thousand public school students are promised more, tax dollars are siphoned off to voucher schools and independent charters that get first place in line, take $1,000 to $1,700 more per student and too often force property taxpayers to make up the difference."

The Fiscal Bureau memo demonstrates that payments to voucher schools under the Governor's budget would range from $7,757 to $8,403 per student by 2018. Including all of Governor Walker's proposed increases, public school students would receive an average $6,703. The Democrats pointed out that voucher payments are likely to increase while marginal hikes for public schools are in peril during the months of Republican budget deliberations ahead.



"We all know how the budget process works. For the last three sessions Republicans have devised plans to slip more for voucher school lobbyists into the bill, and my guess is we can

expect more of the same," said Sen. **Jon Erpenbach** (D-Middleton). "This memo shows why families with students in public schools and property taxpayers should be very wary of GOP plans to widen this gap at the public's expense."

As shown in the memo, the statewide voucher program has been funded since 2015 by general aid taken directly from public districts. Alarmingly, successful but struggling public schools in Wisconsin communities would be operating with less general aid in 2018 than 2010 once unfair pay-offs to special interest voucher schools and private charters are made, the Democrats said.



"The numbers tell the story of the Walker years. Public schools have not been a priority for Governor Walker and the Republican legislature, but hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars have been handed to voucher schools at their expense," said Rep. **Gordon Hintz** (D-Oshkosh). "The Republicans managed to create the largest new entitlement program in recent history."

The Democratic Education leaders noted that the memo shows state tax dollars for voucher operators increasing 12 times faster than total school aids and that voucher payments would more than double over 8 years of GOP control. At the same time, net general aids that support public schools and reduce property taxes would fall 1.3%.

"Special interest lobbyists have had the inside track to state tax dollars since the GOP took over budget-writing and this memo shows how much work we have to do to make this right for public school students and taxpayers," said Rep. **Sondy Pope** (D-Mount Horeb). "It's time to stop making handouts to voucher lobbyists a higher priority than our constitutional responsibility to hundreds of thousands of kids in public schools."