



Wisconsin School Social Workers

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School Social Workers: Governor's Budget Would Destroy Public Education As We know It in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin School Social Workers Association (WSSWA) represents social workers who tirelessly work to address the needs of Wisconsin school children and their families. School Social Workers play a vital role in society because they work in locations where the vast majority of our young people congregate as part of their K-12 education. School Social Workers work to make sure that children are in school and ready to learn, and that our education system thrives to meet all of their educational needs.

WSSWA is extremely concerned about the impact that Governor Walker's proposed 2011-2013 state budget will have on Wisconsin's public schools. Put simply, if the governor's budget goes into effect as proposed, it will no longer be possible to provide the top-quality educational experience that the people of Wisconsin have come to expect and our state's students need and deserve to compete in a global society.

Our ancestors had great foresight and wisdom when they wrote support for public education directly into the Wisconsin Constitution. The constitution makes it clear that public education is the responsibility of the state and "the state must guarantee that a basic educational opportunity be available to each pupil." The governor's budget fails to meet this standard.

Rather than recognize that investing in our children is the key to our future, the budget would actually cut \$843 million in direct state educational funding. When combined with restrictions on other sources of funding, the cut is more like \$1.7 billion.

At the same time, the governor's budget doles out more tax breaks to wealthy individuals and big corporations. It also increases funding for private school vouchers and expands the voucher program. The governor has even talked about expanding the voucher program statewide. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers accurately described the governor's proposals as "morally wrong."

If this budget is approved as proposed, what does it mean for the children and families who send their children to public schools? It means their favorite teachers and staff people, including School Social Workers, may not be at their school at the start of the next school year. Many positions are already on the budgetary chopping block. In the Milwaukee Public Schools alone, more than 18 School Social Worker positions would be cut.

The budget would also mean larger class sizes and the elimination of many popular programs, including Advanced Placement (AP) classes and initiatives promoting science and engineering, which are so important to our state's economic future.

In the strongest possible terms, WSSWA encourages the Legislature to scrap the governor's education plan and produce more funding for our schools. A substantial portion of the \$636 million in increased revenue estimates should be targeted to K-12 education, along with other resources. The children and families of this state deserve nothing less!