



SONDY POPE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
80TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



For Immediate Release

September 01, 2015

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VOUCHER SCHOOLS DRAIN BILLIONS FROM STATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

MADISON – Today, the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau released an overview of state spending on the voucher school program. According to the report, taxpayer payouts to unaccountable voucher schools are expected to exceed \$1.1 billion, with an additional \$30 million funding private school income tax deductions. Representative Sondy Pope (D- Cross Plains), ranking Democratic member on the Assembly Committee on Education, released the following statement regarding these findings:

“It is appalling to me that, in years where we’ve seen the largest cuts in history to public schools, our Governor and Republican legislators are still siphoning funds towards unaccountable vouchers and high-priced private schools,” said Rep. Pope. “The vast majority of students enrolled in the statewide voucher school program were already attending as private pay students. We’ve created a tax-funded entitlement for families who were paying for private school on their own.”

“In budget arguments, Republicans constantly said that we must cut wasteful spending. I don’t know what could be considered more wasteful than creating and expanding a second school system when we aren’t adequately supporting our public schools now.”

In early 2015, Assembly Democrats registered concerns with voucher school accountability, introducing legislation to increase transparency of voucher school spending, elevate instructor standards, and require graduation standards for students. The legislation was ultimately ignored, and budget increases to voucher schools were made without any improvements to their accountability.

“It’s disheartening to see at every turn that Republicans are willing to dole out unlimited funds to special interest groups, the wealthiest Wisconsinites, and unaccountable programs,” said Pope. “Our public school students – who make up over 70 percent of school enrollment – drop down on the priority list every year, and our schools are continuing to show the effects. Wisconsin schools will continue to fall behind nationally unless we prioritize and properly fund our public schools.”

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