



SONDY POPE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
80TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



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Republican Funding Plan “Fails to Meet Expectations.”

The idea of a private school voucher is simple – a voucher is given a family to select a private school of their choosing. But what happens when the state can no longer afford to pay for their stated goal of giving every student a voucher? Unfortunately for the taxpayers of Wisconsin, we're quickly finding out.

Prior to the most recent state budget, students participating in the Racine and statewide voucher programs were paid for by state dollars. The changes Republicans designed in the budget were modeled after the open enrollment program, which reduces aid to pay for a student to attend a different public school, with one key difference: students would be "fully counted by their school district of residence for general aids and revenue limit purposes."

The quoted text is exactly what Republican leaders inserted into a large budget motion and voted on. Twice. It also differs from every other counting mechanism used currently.

So what does this mean for our public schools and why did the Republicans go out of their way to create it?

Schools count students for aid, or what the state reimburses to share the cost of education, based on the previous year's enrollment numbers. This means that while new voucher students were being counted for revenue limits, or what a district can spend, they weren't being aided by the state for those kids...yet.

Despite not receiving any aid, their aid was being reduced to pay for kids attending a private school on a voucher in the current year. Without new taxing authority, that lost aid would come straight out of public school classrooms.

School district spending is also governed by enrollment counts, but it differs from aid in that it is based on a three-year rolling average of a district's enrollment. In practice, that means a student counts as one-third their first year, two-thirds their second, and a full student (or counting fully as stated above) in the third. For almost all school districts, one-third of their

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average expense for a student is less than the voucher amount. The difference would have to come from money that would otherwise be spent on students in the public schools – put simply, money is being taken away from public school students to give to voucher students.

Republicans in the legislature are aware of this problem. They created this language to address it and told public schools it would be fine. They know that roughly 80% of kids receiving a voucher were already in the private school and not counted in the public school finance system. They also know that students who attend school create revenue for the years they are there and that “double counting” is a myth.

But they want you to believe it, and they are preying on the complexity of our funding system to cover up their lies.

The question for Wisconsinites is simple. Did Republicans not understand what they were voting on, or are they purposefully going back to change an effect they did not anticipate?

There are no other options. The dog did not eat their homework (or budget motion in this case).