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February 6, 2020

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Democratic Leaders Back Education Special Session

MADISON, WI – Senate Democratic Leader Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse) and Assembly Democratic Leader Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh) released the following statements after Governor Tony Evers called for a legislative Special Session to invest in Wisconsin public school classrooms and lower property taxes:

“Our students today are the workforce of tomorrow, and the investments we make in our kids will result in better economic opportunities for future generations,” said Senator Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse). “From northern Wisconsin, to the shores of Lake Michigan to right here in western Wisconsin, public schools are the heart of local communities. We need to ensure we are retaining quality teachers, investing in modern facilities and meeting high education standards to give students the best chance at getting ahead. We need to put our money where our mouth is if we want to re-establish Wisconsin’s reputation as a leader in K-12 education.”

“Governor Evers has spent his career working to help Wisconsin students. The governor’s call for a special session on public education will give desperately needed support to school districts across the state,” Rep. Hintz stated. “There should be areas of bipartisan agreement in this proposal. The school-based mental health care funding had Republican support under former Governor Scott Walker and rhetorical support by Republican legislators this session. We’ll see whether this funding is truly a priority for Republicans, or just a talking point. With additional state revenue, we have the ability to get this done before the end of the legislative session.”

Despite overwhelming public support for Governor Evers’ 2019-21 budget that restored funding back into classrooms, Republicans blocked proposals to invest \$1.4 billion more into local classrooms and cut over \$500 million in special education funding. Republicans additionally cut \$46 million to mental health services and significantly reduced funding for rural sparsity aid.

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau recently released new revenue estimates showing the state is now expected to take in an additional \$812.2 million through mid-2021 than previously projected. The proposal called for by Governor Evers takes advantage of these additional funds and prioritizes the needs of Wisconsin students by meeting the 2/3rd state funding commitment for public schools, and investing in special education, mental health services, and rural sparsity aid.

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