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The Unbearable Cost of Opportunity Lost
Sen. Larson reacts to Senate passage of the Republican Budget Proposal

Madison, WI - Wisconsin starts its fiscal year on July 1st with a nearly $7 billion surplus. This record figure presented our legislature with a generational opportunity to invest in the people and services necessary to make our state the best possible place to live, work, and raise a family. Unfortunately, Senate Republicans looked opportunity in the face, kicked it off a cliff, and sent our future hurtling toward the abyss.

Governor Evers showed us all what a budget to meet the moment would have looked like when he released his proposal in January. We can fully fund public education. We can fight climate change and ensure the next generation has clean water. We can strengthen families and our workforce by providing paid family leave, affordable childcare, and a sustainable safety net. We can legalize cannabis. We can have a world-class university system, support our small businesses, and provide targeted tax relief at those who need it most. Governor Evers' budget did all of these things.

Republicans took their knives out, carved out all of the best parts, and started from scratch. They took half of the surplus off the top and put it toward tax cuts that overwhelmingly benefit the rich. This will undoubtedly lead to massive service cuts in future budget cycles. The rest was divided up, distributed to private schools and hospitals, and only then was any consideration given to boosting funding for the core functions of state government.

We could have done so much with $7 billion. Instead, we will all be forced to pay the unbearable cost of opportunity lost. To whatever extent Governor Evers is able to undo any of the damage of this Republican budget with his veto pen, including vetoing the entire budget, he should do so. It would help restore some hope that Wisconsin won't fall further behind the rest of the country.