

Vote Record

Senate - Committee on Education

Date: 5-23-01
 Moved by: Jauch Seconded by: Shibilski
 AB: _____ SB: 69 Clearinghouse Rule: _____
 AJR: _____ SJR: _____ Appointment: _____
 AR: _____ SR: _____ Other: _____

A/S Amdt: _____
 A/S Amdt: _____ to A/S Amdt: _____
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- Be recommended for:
- Passage
 - Introduction
 - Adoption
 - Rejection
 - Indefinite Postponement
 - Tabling
 - Concurrence
 - Nonconcurrence
 - Confirmation

Committee Member

Sen. Richard Grobschmidt, Chair
 Sen. Robert Jauch
 Sen. Kevin Shibilski
 Sen. Jim Baumgart
 Sen. Judith Robson
 Sen. Jon Erpenbach
 Sen. Carol Roessler
 Sen. Alberta Darling
 Sen. Mary Lazich
 Sen. Sheila Harsdorf

| <u>Aye</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Absent</u> | <u>Not Voting</u> |
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Totals: _____



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

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John T. Benson
State Superintendent

Steven B. Dold
Deputy State Superintendent

Testimony on SB 69
May 2001

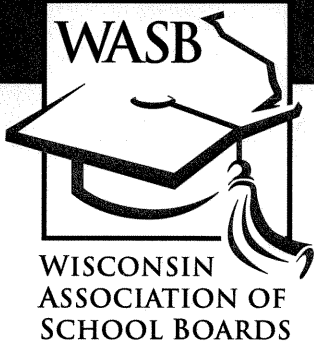
I am Stephanie Petska, Director, Special Education, Department of Public Instruction, testifying on behalf of John Benson in favor of Senate Bill 69. Rightly, state policy makers have looked at the state funding formulas as vehicles for carrying out state policy.

This state has a long and proud history of support for its neediest children, among them children with disabilities. Since at least the 1930s, Wisconsin has provided financial support for special education. From the beginning, those aids were provided because the legislature believed the state needed to share in the cost of these programs if school districts were to take seriously their responsibility to comply with the requirements of the laws passed by the legislature.

The special education statute that was passed by the Wisconsin legislature in 1973 served as a model for legislation in other states and for the law passed by Congress in 1975. With its passage, Wisconsin established a special education categorical aids formula that if fully funded would reimburse salary and fringe benefits of eligible special education staff providing services to children with disabilities at 63% and 51%.

While special education categorical aid levels have not been sufficient to fully fund costs at statutory reimbursement levels since FY 1984-85, the department supports your efforts to restore the level of authorization. We believe it is important to reaffirm in state law a highly visible level of fiscal commitment to the education of children with disabilities in Wisconsin.

Thank you.



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KEN COLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

To: Chairman Rick Grobschmidt
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

Fr: Annette Talis, Legislative Services Coordinator

Re: SB 69—Relating to Special Education Reimbursement Rates

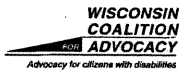
Dt: May 23, 2001

The WASB supports SB 69, which would reinstate target reimbursement rates for special education costs. Although the state would be allowed to prorate payments under this bill, it is important for the state to establish benchmarks for special education reimbursement to demonstrate a shared partnership in serving these children. Clearly, however, it is also critical that lawmakers also support increased special education aid within the 2001-03 biennial budget.

When revenue limits were imposed on school districts, the state was picking up about 40 percent of the cost of special education. As that reimbursement rate has eroded to less than 35 percent, school districts have had to accommodate increasing costs by reallocating funds from other programs.

As a statewide organization representing school board members, the WASB has also been active in recent years in asking local and state policymakers to review special education programs, rules, student labels, staff classifications and available resources to make sure they are helping all children meet academic standards and succeed in life. School board members, like you, want to make sure that expenditures in special education are reaping results for these children.

Thank you.



Quality Education Coalition



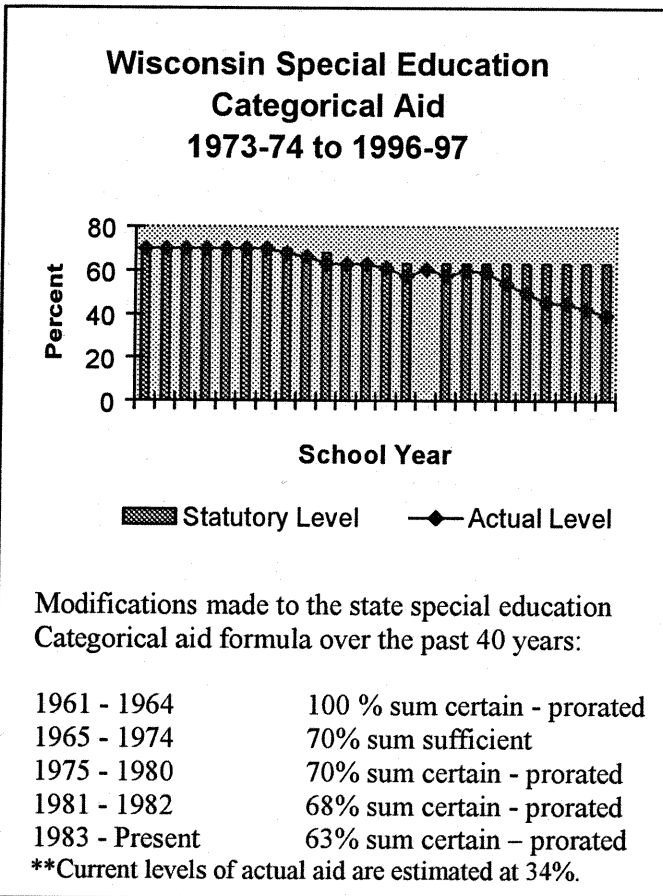
Special Education Coalition

May 23, 2001

All children deserve a quality education. The Special Education Coalition, which represents parents, students, teachers, school administrators and school board members, believes Senate Bill 69 is a step forward in aiding Wisconsin schools in their continuous efforts to achieve that goal.

Wisconsin made a commitment to educating special education students and providing schools with additional funding to do that prior to similar commitments at the national level. Yet, as special education costs have risen in this state, actual levels of categorical aids have continued to decline.

Nationally, however, the average state cost burden for special education was reported at 56 percent.¹ Wisconsin has fallen far below that level at 34 percent.



Furthermore, the federal government in 1997-98 reimbursed Wisconsin for less than 5 percent of special education costs, even though it has committed to reimbursing states for 40 percent of costs.

Special education represents necessary, but required, spending to provide an appropriate quality education. Many districts are still forced to take money from areas that do not fall under this requirement, such as maintenance, supplies, and regular education. This is resulting in an increasing number of conflicts between and among various groups of parents, educators, and advocates.

If we are to ensure that the needs of both special education and regular education students are met, and that both are provided with the quality public education the State of Wisconsin has promised them constitutionally, we need to begin to address this problem now. Senate Bill 69 brings us one step closer to doing just that.

¹ Parish, T.B. & Chambers, J.J. (1996). Financing Special Education. *The Future of Children*, 6(1), 121-138.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any member of the coalition.

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Jennifer A. Kammerud
Director of
Government Relations

TO: Senate Education Committee Members
FROM: Jennifer Kammerud, Director of Government Relations
DATE: May 23, 2001
RE: **Senate Bill 69**

An Alliance of:

**Association of
Wisconsin School
Administrators**

**Wisconsin Association
of School District
Administrators**

**Wisconsin Association
of School Business
Officials**

**Wisconsin Council for
Administrators of
Special Services**

The School Administrators Alliance (SAA) supports Senate Bill 69, as it would return to statute a percentage reimbursement for special education costs to which the state should strive.

State and federal government mandate special education services. Regardless of actual funding for special education these services will be provided. Given current levels of reimbursement, which are currently at around 15 percent from the federal government and 35 percent from state government in the 2000-01 school year, local school districts are forced to pay for special education out of regular education. This is resulting in an increasing number of conflicts between and among various groups of parents, educators, and advocates at the local level.

Using regular education money to pay for special education might be more palatable if the education community at least knew the state was working towards some type of funding goal. At the federal level this is the case. The federal government has committed itself to funding 40 percent of costs. While it does not fund 40 percent of costs, it is a goal the government has placed in statute, which constitutes a vision of fair and adequate reimbursement. The state should also have in statute a goal for fair and adequate reimbursement. This was the case prior to the passage of the last biennial budget by the state.

In the recent Wisconsin Supreme Court decision Vincent vs. Voight, the justices outlined a new educational standard. The court stated, "An equal opportunity for a sound basic education acknowledges those students and districts are not fungible and takes into account districts with disproportionate numbers of disabled students... So long as the legislature is providing sufficient resources so that school districts offer students the equal opportunity for a sound basic education as required by the constitution, the state school finance system will pass constitutional muster." Given this opinion, the SAA feels it is even more imperative that the state has in statute an objective that serves as an indication of the state's commitment towards meeting the new standard outlined by the court.

We are asking for a commitment by the state to work towards a funding goal to ensure that the needs of both special education and regular education students are met, and that both are provided with the quality public education the State of Wisconsin has promised them constitutionally. Senate Bill 69 would provide that commitment.