

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

April 8, 2022

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing **Assembly Bill 446** in its entirety.

The bill would mandate school boards and independent charter schools to assess the early literacy skill of pupils in four-year-old kindergarten to second grade using screening assessments throughout the year and to create a personal reading plan for each pupil in five-year-old kindergarten to second grade who is identified as at-risk. It would also require the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to establish and maintain lists of approved fundamental skills screening assessments, universal screening assessments, and diagnostic assessments on its Internet site based on alignment with model academic standards in reading and language arts, and a mandatory minimum sensitivity rate and specificity rate. Further, this bill would mandate a school board, for each school and district, or operator of an independent charter, to annually submit a report to DPI regarding the number of pupils identified as at-risk, the names of reading assessments used, and the number of pupils in five-year-old kindergarten to second grade who receive literacy interventions, all information which the department would then annually compile and report to the Legislature. The amended bill requires the use of at least \$5,000,0000 in one-time American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 federal funding to implement its new mandates for screenings and interventions or to address staffing or other resource needs necessary for implementation.

When I vetoed the Senate version of this bill, SB 454, I raised concerns about the need for long-term sustainable funding. Wisconsin is projected to have a \$3.8 billion surplus at the end of the 2021-23 biennium—nearly \$2.9 billion more than was expected in June 2021—while the state's 'rainy day' fund now sits at the highest level in state history. Instead of amending the bill to utilize state dollars and ensure ongoing funding, the bill was amended to require the use of already allocated one-time federal funds. I am vetoing this bill in its entirety because I continue to object to overhauling Wisconsin's reading readiness system for assessment and intervention without evidence that the proposed approach is best suited to our students, without long-term, sustainable funding.

As I stated previously, we need to address reading proficiency and increase literacy success in our schools, particularly after the challenges our kids, parents, and schools faced during the pandemic. A bill that will ultimately lead to reducing valuable

instruction time and asks schools to rely on one-time money for long-term expenses fails to provide the necessary and meaningful investments our kids and our schools deserve.

As I advocated for as Superintendent of Public Instruction, and have proposed as Governor is that we need to provide the necessary funding to support the work of our educators, administrators, and staff currently doing the work with our kids to ensure reading and literacy success.

Respectfully submitted,
TONY EVERS
Governor