



**KELDA HELEN ROYS**

STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Rep. Roys Moves to Save 4-Year-Old Kindergarten Grants**

*Roys' budget amendment restores "4K" start-up funding, could benefit Madison area schools*

**Madison, WI** – Rep. Kelda Helen Roys (D-Madison) issued the following statement, urging fellow Assembly members to support her amendment to the state budget that would restore deleted start-up grants for four-year-old kindergarten ("4K") programs:

"The Governor and the Joint Committee on Finance have made significant, deep cuts to help balance the state budget without raising taxes on working families – yet unfortunately they cut critical grants which allow school districts to start offering four-year-old kindergarten.

I am offering an amendment to the state budget that would restore \$925,000 GPR in 2009-10 and \$3,025,000 GPR in 2010-11 in funding for 4K grants. With limited dollars, we must make the smartest investments with taxpayer money – and there is no smarter public investment we can make than educating a young child. Many school districts want to offer this essential program but under current levy limits cannot afford to start four-year-old kindergarten without these grants.

In the face of a record budget deficit brought on by the national economic downturn, legislators must take action to balance the budget while protecting top priorities like education. By restoring grants for four-year-old kindergarten without increasing state spending, this amendment is a win for Wisconsin's children, taxpayers, and future economy."

### Background Information:

A variety of national studies show substantial benefits to low-income children who participate in quality pre-kindergarten programs like four-year-old kindergarten. Additional evidence demonstrates that pre-kindergarten participation benefits children from all income levels. Preliminary data from the Department of Public Instruction suggests that Wisconsin's 4K programs have a positive impact: elevating literacy, and building academic and social skills above the national average. See, for example, <http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/ec-impact-dev.pdf>

### Funding Source:

Fund grants for 4-year old Kindergarten through money currently spent on parent contracts for pupil transportation. According to the Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin spends \$3.5 million paying parents of public and private school students for transporting their children to school. Because the payments are per pupil, DPI has no data on whether students are being transported to public or private schools, nor how many parents collect multiple payments for transporting children to the same school. DPI states that parents are annually paid \$5 per mile per pupil for driving their children to school.\* In these times, with deep cuts being made inside and outside the classroom, we cannot afford this tremendous cost, especially coming at the expense of early childhood education. The proposal would delete all existing parent payments, but allow reimbursements for low-income children who qualify for free or reduced lunch, at the state employee mileage reimbursement rate for actual mileage.

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\*Previous numbers provided by Fiscal Bureau were inaccurate.

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