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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin DOJ Challenges the U.S. Department of Education’s Discontinuation of Critical Grants Awarded for Special Education Services

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) today joined a multistate [lawsuit](#) challenging the U.S. Department of Education’s (Department) discontinuation of awarded grants under the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) program. These competitive grants provide critical funding for the professional development of special education staff and support services for children with disabilities. In the lawsuit, the coalition urges the Court to find the discontinuation of funds to be unlawful and emphasizes the harmful impact of the discontinuation on essential resources for schools, educators, and parents to support students with disabilities.

“Wisconsin’s students with disabilities and their families deserve better than this from our federal government,” said AG Kaul. “Funding that supports special education shouldn’t be cavalierly discontinued following a shift from one administration to another.”

The SPDG program was established in 2004 through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to improve long-term outcomes for vulnerable populations. For decades, the Department administered the SPDG program in a routine and predictable manner by publishing a notice inviting states to apply and identifying relevant priorities that had been subject to notice and comment. After providing an initial award, the Department determined whether the grant should continue for the following year based on enumerated performance and financial metrics. Nevertheless, in January 2025, President Trump departed from this settled practice

Page 1 of 2

and called for the review and termination of federal grants that funded equity-related initiatives.

Wisconsin's SPDG grant funded a statewide program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) that provided special education teachers in participating school districts with training and support. After the discontinuation, neither DPI nor its subgrantees had sufficient funds to sustain its SPDG program and, as a result, Wisconsin's program closed on September 30, 2025. The discontinued program addressed special educator retention in Wisconsin, with only 43.2% of special education teachers remaining in the classroom by their eighth year (notably steeper than the overall statewide teacher retention rate, which sits at 52.6% over the same eight-year span). The program also connected families with schools through family engagement initiatives that empowered parents to advocate for and support their children's education.

In the lawsuit, the coalition argues that the Department's discontinuation of funding violated the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) because it was contrary to law, without observance of procedure required by law, and arbitrary and capricious. The discontinuation also violated the Spending Clause of the United States Constitution.

Joining Wisconsin DOJ in filing this lawsuit are the states of California and Rhode Island.