August 6, 2021

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE:

I am vetoing Senate Bill 119 in its entirety.

This bill would reduce shared revenue payments to counties and municipalities by the amount a county or municipality reduces its budget dedicated to hiring, training, and retaining law enforcement, fire and emergency medical personnel compared to the prior year. The bill also provides for reductions in shared revenue payments in such cases where budgets are held flat, but personnel counts decline. In such cases, payments would be decreased by the amount of the decline in compensation paid to personnel no longer retained by the municipality. Reductions in aid would be redistributed among municipalities not subject to the reductions. These modifications would apply in 2021 and all following years.

I am vetoing this bill because I object to the onerous restrictions it imposes on the ability of Wisconsin local governments to set their budgets. Due in no small part to actions at the state level over the course of recent years, local governments across the state have had to cut funding for public safety as levy limits and expenditure restraints have limited their ability to increase revenue. Rather than help with the fiscal constraints that local governments are experiencing, this bill seeks to micromanage local decision-making. Local governments and local elected officials are well-positioned to make informed decisions about what is best for their communities and how to meet the needs of the people they serve and represent.

To help local governments pay for critical services, my biennial budget request included increases in County and Municipal Aid and levy limit flexibility so that communities across Wisconsin could more readily increase support for essential services *as they see fit*. The Legislature refused to act on these requests and instead attempts through this bill to constrain local governments rather than giving them the tools to pay for increased cost pressures.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Evers
Governor