**Fiscal Facts: Proposed MPS Position Cuts Linked to Constraints on both Budget and Staffing**

Fresh off a voter-approved property tax referendum that provides a revenue infusion for Milwaukee Public Schools, its proposed 2025 budget would eliminate nearly 300 of the district’s full-time equivalent positions.

But the proposed reductions are largely due to factors that make it unlikely the district can fill hundreds of vacant positions -- and that in some instances alleviate the need for it to do so. That’s according to the Wisconsin Policy Forum’s annual brief on the proposed Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) budget. The brief examines the $1.47 billion budget plan recently submitted to the Milwaukee Board of School Directors by the superintendent for the school district’s 2025 fiscal year, which starts on July 1 and runs through June 30, 2025.

The April referendum, authorizing MPS to exceed state revenue limits by $252 million in perpetuity after a four-year phase-in, will help to steady the district’s five-year fiscal outlook. But the brief finds that additional long-term changes likely will be needed to grapple with declining enrollment, state constraints on revenues, workforce challenges, and more.

Notably, the brief did not take into account [an additional development](https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/education/2024/06/03/mps-recruits-consultant-todd-gray-to-fix-serious-financial-problems/73954851007/?utm_campaign=snd-autopilot&cid=twitter_journalsentinel) that came to light after its release. State officials found that MPS made errors in its reported costs for the 2022-23 school year, which could cause a very large reduction in the district’s state aid for the 2024-25 school year.

Our review found that much has changed since the start of 2024, when district officials cited a projected $200 million budget gap as an impetus for the referendum. Thanks to its passage and the district’s subsequent revisions to its fiscal assumptions, it now appears that while a budget gap remains for 2025, it is closer to $20 or $30 million. Some amount of gap was not wholly unexpected, as districts around the country have grappled with the upcoming end to federal pandemic aid.

As a result, this budget features some painful -- if not unpredictable -- choices. It adjusts to a historically tight labor market by shifting more teachers away from positions providing district-wide support and into classrooms to fill vacancies there, and by eliminating some other positions that have been vacant for years and are now deemed unnecessary. The largest group of eliminated positions includes 130 school support teachers, who provided professional development and support for classroom teachers across the district.

While considerable, the challenges of expiring federal dollars and labor shortages appear to be met in this budget without excessive harm. It is difficult to confirm that assessment, however, without more information on the tradeoffs incurred and particularly on the district’s vacancies. MPS did not respond to our request to provide the percentage of eliminated positions that are currently vacant.

Previous Forum research found that, in March, the district had more than 600 vacant positions. District officials have stated that the position cuts should not lead to layoffs, as staff holding a position slated for removal will be offered a different assignment within the district.

Our report concludes that as MPS moves forward with difficult decisions, greater attention to these and other transparency-related points raised in our report and in public testimony will be critical for the community.

*This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education. Learn more at* [*wispolicyforum.org*](https://wispolicyforum.org/research/state-tax-burden-up-but-overall-burden-still-falling/)*.*