

pt370

APRIL 20,01

DEAR JOINT FINANCE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

I AM THE GRANDPARENT OF CHILDREN IN THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. IN ORDER FOR THEM TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND BECOME PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS, THEY NEED SPECIAL SUPPORTS AND RELATED SERVICES. I KNOW THE COSTS HAS RISEN. SO PLEASE INCREASE THE FUNDING FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION. PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES DO CARE THAT ALL CHILDREN RECEIVE A QUALITY EDUCATION. THEY ARE ALSO THE PARENTS OF NON-DISABLED CHILDREN.

PLEASE INVEST IN CHILDREN HEALTH AND LEARNING INITIATIVES, TO ACCELERATE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND INCREASE ATTENDANCE. STANDARD HEALTH AFFECTS LEARNING AND ATTENDANCE. CONTINUE TO FUND THE LONG TERM CARE COUNCILS. ELIMINATE THE LONG WAIT LISTS FOR SERVICES. INCREASE THE FUNDING FOR FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS. SERVICES ARE NEEDED TO INCREASE THE ABILITY OF FAMILIES TO CARE FOR THEIR CHILD WITH A DISABILITY, AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE. THIS ALSO WILL PREVENT OUT OF HOME PLACEMENT.

THANK YOU,
Pat Patterson
PAT PATTERSON
6463 N. 104th. ST
MILWAUKEE WI 53224
(414) 356-0272

April 20, 2001

Dear Members of Joint Finance Legislative Committee:

I am a parent of profoundly deaf daughter who just graduated from Milwaukee Public Schools last year. Because of the wonderful educational supports she received over the last 15 years from MPS, Megan is now attending college in Rochester, New York. This would not have been possible without special education. And special education does cost.

That is why I am here today, asking for your support to increase funding for special education.

In the last few years, providing quality special education programs and services have become increasing difficult for school districts. Lately, I have been hearing from other parents who are concerned that their districts are putting the blame on their children with disabilities as the reason why their districts are cutting back on some popular and necessary school programs. This has put parents like myself in very difficult positions. On the one hand we support our school districts and want quality education for all students. Yet we will furiously defend our children's right to appropriate special education and related services. We are dismayed that our children are being used as political pawns in this whole school financing debate.

Through my work, I am involved in two large statewide coalitions. One is the Survival coalition, a coalition of agencies and organizations who work on behalf of individuals with disabilities. The other is a relatively new coalition called the Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders. This unique group is a coalition of parent groups along with other partners such as Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance, Wisconsin School Association of School Boards, WEAC (Wisconsin Education Association Council, and others. The point is-there is widespread consensus from a variety of groups that support increased funding for special education.

People first. The true measure of a community should be its willingness and compassion to support its most vulnerable members. I ask you to remember Megan and other children and adults with disabilities. Support an increase in funding for special education.

Thank you for the opportunity to bring my concerns before this committee.

In your trust,

Sue Endress
1516 E. Newport Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53211

Janis M. Serak

April 11, 2001
Statement: Joint Finance Committee
Madison, WI

I am the parent of a twenty-three year son who has autism. He graduated from high school in 1998 ready to contribute to society through work and community service. He has been on a County waiting list for adult support services for six years. While he waits for his "number to come up," it has been a tremendous challenge to find resources to enable my son to be active in the community and keep his spirit alive.

I am the Executive Co-Director of the Wisconsin FACETS, an organization that provides training and individual support to over 8,500 parents of children with disabilities annually related to special education and services available - 85% are Hispanic and African American parents, many of whom are also faced with waiting lists. FACETS is a member of the Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders group and supports the position statement developed on April 9th related to special education provisions in the budget. I am the Co-Chair of the Stakeholders.

I am the Immediate Past-President of the Autism Society of Wisconsin. Our Society represents over 1000 parents of individuals with autism spectrum disorders, school personnel, therapists and others, and individuals with autism. **One in every 250 people have an autism spectrum disorder - 26,000 people in Wisconsin. Six babies are born daily in Wisconsin who will later be diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder**. This budget continues to erode supports available to people with autism. The Society is a Quality Education Coalition member of the and fully supports the Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders position statement. The Society is a Survival Coalition member and fully supports the Survival Coalition budget positions.

It is imperative that the budget be amended to:

- **Implement changes in the areas identified in the WISCONSIN SPECIAL EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS's Position Statement.** (See attached).
- **Implement SURVIVAL COALITION Positions.**
- **Eliminate waiting lists for the Family Support Program.** Include \$2.5 million GPR in Year 1 and \$5 million GPR in Year 2. Additional GPR funds above and beyond a fully-funded Family Support Program (see above) to implement Children's Long Term Care Redesign in 4-8 pilot counties
- **Increase funding for the Birth to 3 program.** Include \$2 million GPR Year 1, \$2 million in Year 2
- **Begin piloting Children's Long Term Support (LTC) Redesign (serve 20% of the state's eligible children).** Include \$1.3 million GPR in Year 1 and \$3.3 million GPR in Year 2.
- **Eliminate waiting lists for persons with developmental disabilities and persons with brain injuries.** Include \$6 million General Purpose Revenue (GPR) in Year 1, \$32 million GPR in Year 2 for Community Integration Program (CIP) IB and Brain Injury Waiver.
- **Increase wages for community service workers by 30%.** \$30 million GPR in Year 1, \$60 million in Year 2
- **Eliminate waiting lists for Medicaid Community Support.** \$450,000 GPR Year 1, \$1.5 million GPR Year 2.
- **Add 7 more projects to the Lifespan Respite Initiative.** Include \$225,000 each year

Please do the right thing for people with disabilities. PEOPLE CAN'T WAIT.
Sincerely,
Jan Serak

Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders

Member Organizations

2001/2003 Biennial Budget Recommendations

April 2nd, 2001

Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance:

- Association of Wisconsin School Administrators
- Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials
- Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators
- Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services

Parent Education Project of Wisconsin, Inc.

Quality Education Coalition

Wisconsin Association of School Boards

Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy

Wisconsin Council of Exceptional Children

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction - Division Equity & Advocacy

Wisconsin Education Association Council

Wisconsin Federation of Teachers

Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training and Support, Inc.

Wisconsin Parent Teacher Association

The Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders are representatives from fourteen key Wisconsin school, parent and statewide disability-related organizations that are committed to improving the quality of special education services in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders recently analyzed the implications of the proposed 2001/2003 biennial budget and proposed policy changes included in the budget related to the provision of special education services in Wisconsin. **We came to unanimous agreement on the following positions:**

✓ **Increase the state categorical aids for special education services to a 50% reimbursement rate.** We strongly believe that the Governor's proposed 2001/2003 biennial budget does not provide sufficient funds to meet current levels of reimbursement for special education services

✓ **Increase state aid to 90% reimbursement rate for the expenditures of high cost students that exceed 3 times the school district's average cost per pupil.** We are concerned that the Governor's proposed 2001/2003 biennial budget does not provide sufficient funds for high cost special education students. We also support a one-time revenue cap exemption for the unreimbursed school district expenses for these children.

✓ **Modify Medical Assistance -School Based Services in the proposed budget so that school districts will receive at least 90% of the federal cost sharing reimbursement.** We are concerned that participating Wisconsin school districts will continue to receive only about 60% of the federal cost sharing reimbursement for Medical Assistance -School Based Services since school districts provide 100% of the state share in this program.

Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders

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Wisconsin School

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Wisconsin Parent Teacher Association

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✓ **Increased Funding for Alternative Education Programs.** We are concerned with the lack of funding for Alternative Education Programs. These programs are not limited to children with disabilities. We recommend a \$5 million increase in the first year, and a \$10 million increase in the second year of the biennium. Appropriate funding to ensure adequate availability of quality alternative educational programs in this age of "no tolerance policies" is absolutely necessary.

✓ **Separate consideration of all Chapter 115 revisions from the budget process.** Such proposed revisions as 115.28(9), 115.77(3), 115.78(2)(c), 115.782(2)(e), 115.898(2) will change the way special education services are provided in Wisconsin. If the legislature wishes to consider such changes in Chapter 115, we as stakeholders, believe this would best be accomplished through a separate bill before the Assembly and Senate Education committees. Wisconsin's children with disabilities deserve, at the very least, a discussion that is not diluted by the many other issues in the budget. [The WASB supports the retention of 115.28(9) within the budget process.]

✓ **Increase Funding so that all Counties have an Integrated Service Program.** We are concerned that the "Integrated Service Program" (ISPs), also known as "wraparound programs", which are currently operating very successfully in 28 counties as pilot programs, will not be expanded to additional counties. These programs have helped children stay in school and out of institutions thereby saving the state money and improving the lives of these children and their families. We recommend that these successful pilot programs be implemented in all Wisconsin counties at an additional cost of \$3.2 million plus \$800,000 for staff and administration.

We are making these recommendations as a diverse coalition concerned with the future of special education services in Wisconsin. We ask that you give these recommendations serious consideration and would appreciate the opportunity to be a part of the ongoing dialogue on these issues.

Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders

ORGANIZATION	COMPOSITION	MEMBERSHIP
Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of Wisconsin School Administrators • Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials • Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators • Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Principals, Supervisors, etc., Business Administration officials Public School Superintendents Directors of Pupil Services and Special Education Directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,515 Members 615 Members 445 Members 235 Members
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Wisconsin Parent Teacher Association	Parents and Teachers	50,000 Members



Wisconsin Survival Coalition

SPECIAL EDUCATION

2001-2003 Budget Proposals from the Quality Education Coalition

For more information contact:

Jeff Spitzer-Resnick at 608-267-0214; spitznick@w-c-a.org

The Quality Education Coalition (QEC), is Wisconsin's only statewide coalition of parents and advocates which promotes quality special education services throughout Wisconsin. QEC is acutely aware of the dire situation which children with disabilities face in their struggle to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in Wisconsin schools as guaranteed them under both Wisconsin and federal law. QEC proposes the following five point plan in order to begin to stem the tide of eroding quality of special education for thousands of Wisconsin children.

General Special Education Aid

In the 1999-2001 biennium, faced with the worst crisis in Wisconsin's history of special education funding, the legislature and governor passed a budget with the first increase in special education categorical aids in 6 years. While that increase was a big accomplishment, it essentially only continued state funding of local special education costs at a 35% reimbursement rate. Thus, the crisis remains.

Although the Governor's budget includes increases, the state's commitment to special education would decline to 33%. This is unacceptable.

QEC supports sufficient state funding of special education categorical aids to reimburse local special education costs at a rate of 50%.

"High Cost Children"

The State of Wisconsin has never reimbursed local school districts at a higher rate when they have children whose special education costs are extraordinary.

QEC supports state funding of children in special education whose costs exceed three times the

state average per pupil expenditure at a rate of 90% of the excess costs over three times the state average in both years of the biennium. In addition, QEC supports a one time revenue cap exemption for the unreimbursed school district expenses for these children.

Alternative Education Programs

Alternative education programs, while not limited to children with disabilities, often serve as additional valuable resources to these children.

QEC supports a \$5 million increase in alternative education program funding in the first year of the biennium, and a \$10 million increase in alternative education program funding in the second year of the biennium.

Integrated Services Programs

The Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) currently funds 28 county pilot Integrated Services Programs (ISPs), also known as wraparound programs, which are intended to provide coordinated multi-agency programming to children with severe emotional

disabilities. It is well documented that these programs have helped children stay in school and out of institutions.

QEC supports creating pilot programs in all counties at an additional cost of \$3.2 million plus \$800,000 for state staff to administer the program.

Medical Assistance School Based Services (MA-SBS)

In 1997, Wisconsin's Medical Assistance (MA) program was modified to allow school districts to bill the MA program for certain special education costs.

Unfortunately, school districts do not receive the entire federal cost sharing reimbursement (slightly less than 60% of the total cost). Instead, the State of Wisconsin applies the federal share to general revenues and not school services, despite the fact that the local school districts must pay the entire state matching portion.

QEC supports modifying the MA-SBS reimbursement formula such that local school districts receive 100% of the federal cost sharing reimbursement.

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Washington, DC

Ms. Selina Wellington
Queens, NY

Mr. Armstrong Williams
Washington, DC

Mrs. Taunya Young
East Cleveland, OH



Black Alliance for Educational Options

Testimony
Committee on Joint Finance
April 20, 2001

My name is Sherry Street. I am a member of the Milwaukee Chapter of the Black Alliance for Educational Options. The Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) is a new national organization whose mission is to actively support parental choice to empower families and increase educational options for Black children. Including, private school choice, charter schools, contracting authority for public schools and home schooling.

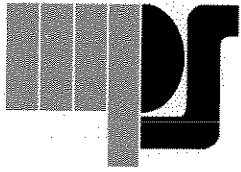
I am here today to express our membership's support for the budget bill provisions that provide for a longitudinal study and affect student eligibility in the Milwaukee Parental School Choice program.

For the first time in decades, low-income children have educational freedom because their parents have the power to choose the schools best for their children—power that most parents take for granted. Milwaukee schools, public and private, have responded positively, taking actions to meet parent's needs.

In conclusion, I urge you, on behalf of MCBAEO members, to continue to give this program a chance. Provide for a longitudinal study to assess impact and to protect the program from regulation that will discourage private school participation and limit opportunity for Milwaukee children.

Thank you.

750 N. 18th Street • Milwaukee, WI 53233
414.288.8203 Office • 414.288.2309 Fax
www.baeoonline.org



April 20, 2001

To: Members of the Joint Finance Committee
From: Marybeth Sandvig, Principal, Manitoba School
Re: Proposed Budget Cuts to the SAGE Program - 2001-2003 Budget

I want to thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on the Governor's proposed 2001-2003 budget, specifically with respect to its impact on the SAGE program. I am the principal of Manitoba School, an MPS K3 - Gr. 6 school. Manitoba School is one of the 370 schools statewide slated to lose funding in the SAGE program for lower class sizes in grades 2 and 3.

At this time last year, the staff at Manitoba School was enthusiastically developing our SAGE application, in the hope of being one of the schools to be awarded a SAGE contract, following the years of the SAGE program as a successful pilot. We were awarded a three year contract and immediately implemented all components of the SAGE program in our four K5 and four grade 1 classrooms.

During our first year of implementation, I have observed first hand the benefits young children experience when their teacher has the time to provide each child with a significantly higher level of individualized attention. In four of six of our SAGE classrooms, we are able to provide a 15:1 classroom, providing those children with not only increased attention of the teacher but a classroom with more space and a learning environment that supports the needs of each child. I have observed a significant increase in teachers ability to work with small groups of children particularly in the early literacy areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, reading and writing. Finally I have observed a significant increase in teachers' ability to successfully handle even the most serious challenges to their students' learning.

Furthermore, I have observed our K5 and grade one teachers grow into a committed team of professionals. They have worked together to develop their Performance Objectives, as accountability measures, to ensure that increased student achievement is the result of the smaller class size and their increased ability to work closely with the children. In addition, they have closely examined our curriculum and have created a coordinated early literacy curriculum solidly established in K5 and grade one with grade two anticipated to implement similar efforts next year.

We have spent the 2000-2001 school year committed to developing a solid, early literacy curriculum for our children in K5 through grade three, in anticipation of the expansion of the SAGE program to grades two and three. As a result, we have devoted all of our staff

development efforts to creating a team of K5 through grade three teachers, committed to implementing a guided reading and writing program, that guarantees every child's right to be taught reading at their instructional level, using appropriate leveled reading materials in small groups. My expectation of each of these teachers is that they increase their knowledge and skills and become an expert in teaching reading, a diagnostician in assessing the challenges our students present and prescriptive in their interventions. These expectations require that teachers have the time every day to closely analyze the children's reading and writing behaviors. This is possible to a much higher degree with the class size reduction offered by the SAGE program.

It is a personal frustration to me to repeatedly stand before my staff and the school community, asking for support and enthusiasm of a new initiative, program, instructional strategy or philosophy, only to once again experience a cut in the funding and scope of the program. We signed a contract for three years, and planned for expansion to grades two and three by providing staff development to all of our primary teachers, by already purchasing curriculum materials for additional grade two classrooms for the 2001-2002 school year and by planning teaching and room assignments, as well as planning for the hiring of additional teachers. The Manitoba School community has taken the responsibility for implementing the SAGE program for three years very seriously. Unfortunately, the Governor's budget does not take the funding commitment as seriously.

In closing, I should point out that among MPS schools, Manitoba School has a significantly lower level of children in poverty. Our Title I percentage of children and families at the poverty level for 2001-2002 funding is 51.8%. Our SAGE percentage has been calculated at just under 48%. We understand that there are clearly needier schools within our own community, and around the state of Wisconsin. But we are facing one out of every two children coming to school without the advantages and opportunities afforded middle class children. And this is especially evident in the children's readiness to learn to read. For many of them, they simply have not had the exposure to experiences that prepare children to learn to read long before they come to kindergarten.

In closing, I strongly urge you to uphold the commitment made to Manitoba School and the 370 other schools in the state of Wisconsin, and continue our SAGE funding for grades 2 and 3 as part of the biennial budget. You have the data to support that SAGE is a successful program, resulting in increased student achievement. The children in the state of Wisconsin with the fewest opportunities and advantages deserve the SAGE program, regardless of the fact that their school has 48% of kids in poverty, or 98% of kids in poverty.

Thank you for your serious interest in hearing from the public on this and all education matters effected by the proposed budget cuts. I am available and eager to answer additional questions you may have.



parent education project
of wisconsin, inc.

Testimony: April 20, 2001
Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee

My name is Sister Patrice Colletti and I stand before you today in several different capacities. I am the executive director of the Parent Education Project of Wisconsin, Inc., an independent, parent-to-parent not-for-profit agency that assists over 18,000 Wisconsin families of children with disabilities each year to solve special education related problems.

I am also a former member of Wisconsin's Special Education Advisory Council, a member of Wisconsin Council on Exceptional Children, and a member of the Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders group, a multi-perspective coalition of educators, parents, advocates, administrators, and school board leaders. I am an educator and a leader in the non-profit sector.

As I look at the proposed budget bill, I have four critical points to make today.

1. Wisconsin should NOT use a budget bill to change special education laws. **Changes to Chapter 115 that are policy changes should not be in this budget bill.** They are important to consider carefully, using a democratic process of dialogue by stakeholders. Changes to Chapter 115 must go before the Assembly and Senate Education committees in the form of a separate bill and should not be folded into this budget bill.
2. Wisconsin has a responsibility to **invest in children and families**, particularly families and children with disabilities. We need a budget bill that:
 - Supports sufficient state funding of special education aids to reimburse local special education costs at a rate of at least 50%.
 - Reimburses local districts for 90% of the costs over three times the state average for special education costs that exceed three times the state average.
 - Increase funding for Alternative Education Programs.
 - Create Integrated Services Programs, on a pilot basis, in all counties. It has been well documented that "wraparound" programming have helped children with severe emotional disabilities stay in school and out of institutions.
 - Modifies the Medical Assistance School Based Services reimbursement formula so that local school districts receive 100% of the federal cost sharing reimbursement.
 - Eliminates waiting lists for services for individuals with disabilities.
3. Wisconsin has a responsibility to invest in young children with disabilities by funding Birth to three programming. **Increase funding to B-3.**
4. Wisconsin has a responsibility to ensure that children with disabilities enrolled in our public schools receive a free appropriate public education. This means **dealing with the challenges of special education funding.**
 - The proposed budget bill includes a shift to "census based funding" formula for special education.
 - Many will agree that the current formula for special education funding, particularly when coupled with a continuing revenue cap on education spending and a decreasing rate of special education reimbursement, has created a crisis in our classrooms.
 - We must look closely at special education funding. But, we must do this responsibly and carefully.

• *Answers to your Special Education Questions* •

- Keeping this proposal for a different special education funding mechanism in this budget bill is NOT a responsible choice.
 - a. I urge you to remove the proposal for a change to a census based funding mechanism from this proposed budget and instead tackle it separately in a way that allows open discourse, competent dialogue, and careful collaborative planning from the many stakeholders who will be impacted by it.
 - b. Funding mechanisms have significant and far-reaching policy implications and will impact the effectiveness of education for ALL children in Wisconsin. Funding mechanisms are complex and they require clear, focused attention.
 - c. Funding mechanisms for special education have multiple and complex perspectives which must be carefully and thoroughly investigated. Responsible legislative decisions must be made, but they must be made from a strong and clear knowledge base.
 - d. Much research has already been done, including research by the legislature. We must use that research, dialogue about that research, and apply that research to make these significant changes. We cannot do so within this budget process. A shift to a census based formula, without the research, debate, and democratic process is a risk, a big risk.
 - e. Policy must ultimately reflect what works best for ALL our children in Wisconsin. We must look carefully at the issue of special education funding, and we must do this separately from this budget bill.
 - f. As elected representatives, you need to know what your own constituents want and need in terms of equitable special education funding. Wisconsin has begun the research-based discussion and public debate on special education funding and must use that information to create a better system for funding.

Our children are a critical investment in our future. We must do what is right by them. I urge you to make sure that your communities' children receive a public education that meets our needs today and tomorrow.

1. If the Legislature wants to change special education law, Chapter 115, it should do so separately from the budget process.
2. Wisconsin must invest in Birth-to-three programming.
3. Wisconsin must invest in families and children with disabilities by funding special education and related services at an adequate level.
4. Wisconsin must remove special education funding mechanism changes from this budget bill and consider them separately, and carefully, prior to changes for improvement.

HANDOUTS:

Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders: Membership list, recommendations

Quality Education Coalition: 2001-2003 Budget Proposals for Special Education, through the Wisconsin Survival Coalition

Quality Education Coalition: Letter Urging Careful Work on Special Education Funding Mechanism

Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders

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Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders

2001/2003 Biennial Budget Recommendations

April 2nd, 2001

Wisconsin School
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Wisconsin Special Education Stakeholders

Page 2 (Biennial Budget Recommendations, 4/2/01)

Member

Organization

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✓ **Increased Funding for Alternative Education Programs.** We are concerned with the lack of funding for Alternative Education Programs. These programs are not limited to children with disabilities. We recommend a \$5 million increase in the first year, and a \$10 million increase in the second year of the biennium. Appropriate funding to ensure adequate availability of quality alternative educational programs in this age of "no tolerance policies" is absolutely necessary.

✓ **Increase Funding so that all Counties have an Integrated Service Program.** We are concerned that the "Integrated Service Program" (ISPs), also known as "wraparound programs", which are currently operating very successfully in 28 counties as pilot programs, will not be expanded to additional counties. These programs have helped children stay in school and out of institutions thereby saving the state money and improving the lives of these children and their families. We recommend that these successful pilot programs be implemented in all Wisconsin counties at an additional cost of \$3.2 million plus \$800,000 for staff and administration.

We are making these recommendations as a diverse, but united, coalition concerned with the future of special education services in Wisconsin. We ask that you give these recommendations serious consideration and would appreciate the opportunity to be a part of the ongoing dialogue on these issues.

APR 20, 2001

WASHINGTON H.S. 10A-5P
2525 N. SHERMAN BLVD

SPECIAL EDUCATION

2001-2003 Budget Proposals from the Quality Education Coalition

For more information contact:

Jeff Spitzer-Resnick at 608-267-0214; spitznick@w-c-a.org

The Quality Education Coalition (QEC), is Wisconsin's only statewide coalition of parents and advocates which promotes quality special education services throughout Wisconsin. QEC is acutely aware of the dire situation which children with disabilities face in their struggle to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in Wisconsin schools as guaranteed them under both Wisconsin and federal law. QEC proposes the following five point plan in order to begin to stem the tide of eroding quality of special education for thousands of Wisconsin children.

General Special Education Aid

In the 1999-2001 biennium, faced with the worst crisis in Wisconsin's history of special education funding, the legislature and governor passed a budget with the first increase in special education categorical aids in 6 years. While that increase was a big accomplishment, it essentially only continued state funding of local special education costs at a 35% reimbursement rate. Thus, the crisis remains. It merely did not worsen.

Although the Governor's budget includes increases, the state's commitment to special education would decline to 33%. This is unacceptable.

QEC supports sufficient state funding of special education categorical aids to reimburse local special education costs at a rate of 50%.

"High Cost Children"

The State of Wisconsin has never reimbursed local school districts at a higher rate when they have children whose special education costs are extraordinary.

QEC supports state funding of children in special education whose costs exceed three times the

state average per pupil expenditure at a rate of 90% of the excess costs over three times the state average in both years of the biennium. In addition, QEC supports a one time revenue cap exemption for the unreimbursed school district expenses for these children.

Alternative Education Programs

Alternative education programs, while not limited to children with disabilities, often serve as additional valuable resources to these children.

QEC supports a \$5 million increase in alternative education program funding in the first year of the biennium, and a \$10 million increase in alternative education program funding in the second year of the biennium.

Integrated Services Programs

The Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) currently funds 28 county pilot Integrated Services Programs (ISPs), also known as wraparound programs, which are intended to provide coordinated multi-agency programming to children with severe emotional

disabilities. It is well documented that these programs have helped children stay in school and out of institutions.

QEC supports creating pilot programs in all counties at an additional cost of \$3.2 million plus \$800,000 for state staff to administer the program.

Medical Assistance School Based Services (MA-SBS)

In 1997, Wisconsin's Medical Assistance (MA) program was modified to allow school districts to bill the MA program for certain special education costs.

Unfortunately, school districts do not receive the entire federal cost sharing reimbursement (slightly less than 60% of the total cost). Instead, the State of Wisconsin applies the federal share to general revenues and not school services, despite the fact that the local school districts must pay the entire state matching portion.

QEC supports modifying the MA-SBS reimbursement formula such that local school districts receive 100% of the federal cost sharing reimbursement.



Wisconsin Survival Coalition

FAMILIES ARE WORTH IT

2001-2003 Proposal for the Children with Disabilities and their Families Budget Package

For more information contact:
Liz Hecht at 608-263-7148; hecht@waisman.wisc.edu

Waiting lists for services for children with disabilities and their families have grown dramatically in recent years. The children's system is also too complex and hard to navigate, with too many rules and too little flexibility. Certain services are available in some counties but not others, and service coordination is available for only a fraction of the families who need it. Medicaid prior authorization decisions are too far removed from the person, involve too much red tape, and are often unfair. Parents do not have enough say in the planning process for their families.

Family Support Program & Birth to Three Services

To serve all families on current Family Support Program waiting lists:

- Provide \$2.5 million in new GPR funds in Year 1 of the biennium -- to begin phasing in families on waiting lists
- Provide \$5 million in new GPR funds in Year 2 of the biennium -- to complete the phase-in (2500 families at \$2,000/year = \$5 million per year)

Increase funding for the Birth to Three program:

- Provide \$2 million GPR in Year 1 and \$2 million GPR in Year 2 -- to reduce delays in receiving Birth to Three services

Lifespan Respite Initiatives

- Provide an increase of \$225,000 in each year to add 7 respite projects to the existing 5 projects

Increase Funding for Special Education

- Increase Special Education Categorical Aids to reimburse 50% of local special education costs
- Implement DPI's proposal for high cost children in Year 1 of the biennium (rather than Year 2 as DPI proposes): for students whose costs exceed three times the state average expenditure/student, the state will cover 90% of the excess costs (above the three times the average level)
- Expand on DPI's proposal for alternative education program funding: provide \$5 million in Year 1 and \$10 million in Year 2
- Expand Integrated Services Programs (also known as wrap-around programs) for children with severe emotional disabilities to all counties: \$3.2 million for services and \$800,000 for state staff to administer the program in each year
- Modify the Medicaid school based services formula so school districts receive 100% of the federal cost-sharing reimbursement

Changing the System - Getting Children's Long Term Care Redesign Started

What Needs to be Fixed - It's Not Just Funding:

- the system is too complex and hard to navigate,
- some services are available in one county but not in another county,
- too many rules and little flexibility in the way services are provided,
- service coordination is only available for a fraction of the families who need it,
- Medicaid prior authorization decisions are too far removed from the person, involve too much red tape, and are often unfair,
- it's hard to get clear and accurate information about services,
- parents don't have enough say in the planning process for their families,
- some families need a higher level of services than can be attained through any of the programs, and
- adult services are a higher priority than children's services in Family Care counties.

Changing the System means changing State Law:

- to authorize new flexible 1915C Medicaid Waiver (to access more federal funds for children's services)
- to authorize 4-8 pilot counties in 2001-02 serving 20% of the eligible children in Wisconsin
- to establish a right to service for children with significant long term care needs
- to provide an assurance of continuity of service (i.e. families currently receiving services will not lose them)
- to allow children and families to convert from CIP1A, CIP 1B, COP-W to the new waiver in the pilot counties (if they want to)

We also need "a new way of doing business" in the Children's Long Term Care System

- families will be partners with the system (including in Medicaid prior authorization decisions)
- service coordination for all children/families who need it
- outcome based services
- information and assistance readily available

Funding in 2001-2003 for Children's Long Term Care Redesign:

- Additional GPR (state general purpose revenue) funds above and beyond a fully-funded Family Support Program (see above) to implement Children's Long Term Care Redesign in 4-8 pilot counties.

Year 1: \$900,000 GPR for services
\$390,000 for state and county planning/administration

Year 2: \$2.7 million GPR for services
\$620,000 for state and county planning/administration



GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

2001-2003 Governor's Budget Recommendations vs. Survival Coalition Proposal for Disability Services

Budget information prepared by Gerry Born, ARC-Wisconsin Disability Association, (608) 251-9272; arcwger@itis.com

<p><i>The Waiting List Initiative</i></p> <p>Proposal: Eliminate waiting lists for persons with developmental disabilities and persons with brain injuries - \$6 million GPR in Yr. 1 and \$32 million GPR in Yr. 2 for CIP IB and Brain Injury Waiver</p> <p>Proposal: Eliminate waiting lists for persons with physical disabilities - \$2 million GPR in Yr. 1 and \$6 million GPR in Yr. 2. for COP-Waiver</p>	<p>Budget: \$0 for Waiting List and All Community Care</p>
<p>Proposal: Eliminate waiting lists for the Family Support Program - \$2.5 million GPR in Year 1 & \$5 million GPR in Year 2</p>	<p>Budget: \$0 for Family Support</p>
<p>Proposal: Increase funding for the Birth to 3 program - \$2 million GPR in Yr. 1 and \$2 million GPR in Yr. 2</p>	<p>Budget: \$0 for Birth to Three *</p>
<p>Proposal: Eliminate waiting lists for Medicaid Community Support Programs for adults with mental illness - \$450,000 GPR in Yr. 1 and \$1.5 million GPR in Yr. 2</p>	<p>Budget: \$928,000 Federal funds each year for Prevention, Early Intervention and Recovery Services</p>
<p><i>Crisis in Community Services</i></p> <p>Proposal: Provide \$30 million GPR in Year 1 and \$60 million in Year 2 to increase wages for community service workers by 30%.</p>	<p>Budget: \$0 Rate Increases</p>
<p><i>"Families are Worth It" Children and Families Package</i></p> <p>Proposal: Begin piloting Children's LTC Redesign (serve 20% of the state's eligible children) - \$1.3 million GPR in Year 1 and \$3.3 million GPR in Year 2.</p> <p>Proposal: Increase funding for the Family Support Program and the Birth to Three Program*</p> <p>Proposal: Add 7 more projects to the Lifespan Respite Initiative (@\$225,000 each year)</p>	<p>Budget: Language to apply for authorizing waivers, but no funds</p> <p>Budget: \$0 *</p>
<p>Proposal: Increase funding for Special Education</p>	<p>Budget: Additional \$10 million yr. 1 and additional \$15 million yr. 2 GPR, which still represents a decline in the state special education reimbursement rate from 35.7% to 33.2%.</p>

<p><i>State Institutions</i></p> <p>Proposal: Increase the CIP IA rate to \$300/day for new placements, and \$160/day for people who previously moved to the community. Close two State Centers within five years.</p>	<p>New CIP IA placement rate increase to \$200 first year and \$225 in year 2. Thirty placements per year are expected to be made.</p>
<p><i>Family Care</i></p> <p>Proposal: Funding for the Alternative Model</p>	<p>Budget: No additional pilots; reduce non-MA enrollments by 50%; reduce resource center inflation by \$577,251; eliminate LTC Council, external advocacy and start up funding for new sites totalling a reduction of \$699,765. Total changes from DHFS request equal a reduction of 22,697,078. Total increase for the biennium is \$10,841,811</p>
<p><i>Mental Health Package</i></p> <p>Proposal: Increase funding for Mental Health/Substance Abuse demonstration project counties, and fund independent advocacy component, evaluation and planning</p> <p>Proposal: Medicaid CSP funding to end waiting lists (which violate Medicaid law)*</p> <p>Proposal: Funding for Medicaid Crisis Intervention Services</p> <p>Proposal: Increase funding for wraparound services for children with severe emotional disabilities</p> <p>Proposal: Comprehensive Mental Health/Substance Abuse Parity Insurance</p> <p>Proposal: Funding for consumer and family support</p>	<p>Budget: \$160,000 FED for Pilots year 1, \$928,000 FED for other services each year</p>
<p><i>Cross Disability Programs</i></p> <p>Proposal: DVR funding and reforms</p> <p>Proposal: Specialized transportation funding</p> <p>Proposal: Assistive Technology Initiative:</p>	<p>Budget: \$1 million per year</p> <p>Budget: 3% increase year 1 and 3.4 increase year 2. \$225,800 year 1 and \$483,500 year 2.</p> <p>Budget: \$0</p>

Additional Items in Governor's Budget

- \$115,000,000 for nursing home increases in Year 1 and \$157,160,800 in Year 2 through the Intergovernmental Transfer Program
- 5% increase each year for noninstitutional providers through IGT including home health, personal care, durable medical equipment, mental health, and therapies.
- 60 CIP1B slots for Year 1 and 686 CIP1I slots for Year 1 in Nursing Home Bed Closing Relocations

* Also part of the Waiting List Initiative

Quality Education Coalition

C/o WCA 16 N. Carroll St. Suite 400
Madison WI 53703

Regarding Wisconsin's Proposed Biennial Budget

The Quality Education Coalition is a coalition of over 11,000 parents, advocates and professionals who work together to influence the quality of special education in Wisconsin. In response to the proposed budget, the Quality Education Coalition identified a critical issue we feel Wisconsin must deal with. Wisconsin needs a better mechanism for equitably funding special education.

However, the Quality Education Coalition joins others in advocating that this important issue be pulled out of the budget bill and deal with it thoroughly and separately.

Wisconsin has a responsibility to ensure that children with disabilities enrolled in our public schools receive a free appropriate public education. This means **dealing with the challenges of special education funding**. The proposed budget bill includes a shift to "census based funding" formula for special education. Many will agree that the current formula for special education funding, particularly when coupled with a continuing revenue cap on education spending and a decreasing rate of special education reimbursement, has created a crisis in our classrooms.

We must look closely at special education funding. But, we must do this responsibly and carefully. Keeping this proposal for a different special education funding mechanism in this budget bill is NOT a responsible choice. I urge you to remove the proposal for a change to a census based funding mechanism from this proposed budget and instead tackle it separately in a way that allows open discourse, competent dialogue, and careful collaborative planning from the many stakeholders who will be impacted by it.

Funding mechanisms have significant and far-reaching policy implications and will impact the effectiveness of education for ALL children in Wisconsin. Funding mechanisms are complex and they require clear, focused attention.

Funding mechanisms for special education have multiple and complex perspectives which must be carefully and thoroughly investigated. Responsible legislative decisions must be made, but they must be made from a strong and clear knowledge base.

Much research has already been done, including research by the legislature. We must use that research, dialogue about that research, and apply that research to make these significant changes. We cannot do so within this budget process. A shift to a census based formula, without the research, debate, and democratic process is a risk, a big risk.

Policy must ultimately reflect what works best for ALL our children in Wisconsin. We must look carefully at the issue of special education funding, and we must do this separately from this budget bill.

Finally, as elected representatives, you need to know what your own constituents want and need in terms of equitable special education funding. Wisconsin has begun the research-based discussion and public debate on special education funding and must use that information to create a better system for funding.

Our children are a critical investment in our future. We must do what is right by them. I urge you to make sure that your communities' children receive a public education that meets our needs today and tomorrow.

Sincerely,


S. Patrice Colletti, SDS

April 20, 2001

I am Mary Jante, the Director of Academic Support for Milwaukee Area Technical College. As director, I am here to discuss the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) budget.

Over the past twenty years, MATC has received funding from DVR in the form of a 100% contract. This means that we received the amount requested with no matching funds. Two years ago, DVR requested that we go to a Third Party Contract, which meant that we transferred matching funds to them, so they could attract more federal dollars. Currently, DVR is proposing that we enter an agreement with them for fee for service. This means that we do not get funds until the service given to a client has been done.

We are requesting that DVR return to a 100% contract with us, so we can continue to provide their clients with services. We serve an average of 250 DVR clients annually. Returning to a fee for service, as is proposed by DVR, is an arrangement that causes difficulty for both students and staff within an institution as large as MATC. Based upon this type of funding, this does not give MATC

1. adequate time to provide needed accommodations for students
2. adequate time to adjust staffing based on needs due to lack of prior knowledge of clients' needs
3. allow MATC to live-up to institutional contractual commitments
4. a workable clerical situation due to the high volume of paper turn around and billing procedures.

We are currently receiving, \$413,875 from DVR. We are requesting for 2001-2002, an increase of \$33,000 to \$447,212. We request that a 100% contract with no match be given to MATC, so that we can continue to provide DVR clients with quality services, which include academic support, accommodations, advising, counseling, interpreting, notetaking and tutoring.

MATC requires a 100% DVR contract for services for 2001-2002, so that we can continue to provide services to members of the community who can lead productive lives through a degree or diploma from a technical college.

April 20, 2001

Testimony from Tina Johnson
Milwaukee City Council PTA/PTSA
Legislative Chair
Re: Vouchers

I could come here today and represent several different organizations, whipping out a number of different titles. But I come to you today as a parent, a parent of a six year old, middle class, African-American male whose name is Jeremiah.

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program is the largest and longest running, publicly funded private and religious school voucher program. Passed by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1990, the choice program in 2000-2001 enrolled about 10,000 students at the cost of 49 million dollars, 25 of which was paid by Milwaukee taxpayers, the other half divided by the rest of the State.

The Voucher program serves only 10% of the MPS population.

The deficit in the Milwaukee Public School System for the 2000-2001 school year was 32 million dollars.

Milwaukee Public Schools must comply with open admission requirements, serve special needs students, hire certified teachers, adopt State curriculum standards and measure student achievement. Public school board meetings are open to the public as are the financial records, attendance rates and test score reports. NONE of this is true of private/religious voucher schools.

In the Governor's 2001-2003 proposed budget, there is a 17% increase for the Milwaukee Choice Program. The State has also increased the income level for those who can participate, opening up the program to more than low income families as was originally designed.

My question is: WHY? Who is this program benefiting?

At a time when schools across the State of Wisconsin are facing deficit situations, cutting budgets to the bone and eliminating teaching staff just to balance budgets - Why are we talking about throwing more money into a program that has no assurance that it is doing what it was designed to do: improve student achievement? A program that is allowed to refuse to accept students with disabilities, who are not English proficient or who have other special needs.

How can supporting an increase in the Voucher program help to get more of the desperately needed financial resources into the public school classrooms in Burlington, Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls, Beloit and Superior?

How is this program advancing and improving the quality of my son's public education in his Milwaukee classroom?

In a report just released by the American Teachers Federation: approximately 40% of the money paid by Wisconsin taxpayers to private voucher schools in 1998-99 was in excess of the amount charged to private citizens purchasing the same services. In a program that cost a total of 28.4 million dollars that year, Wisconsin taxpayers overpaid private and religious schools more than 11 million dollars. Choice vouchers were 45% of the total revenue in religious schools, nearly twice the share produced by tuition.*

Again the question remains - Who is this program benefiting?

Instead of supporting an increase and revision of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program - I think the responsible step for this committee to take is to examine the financial accountability, student achievement records, admission records and money flow of this costly program and implement legislation mandating that ALL schools receiving public tax dollars are held to the same standards, assessments, hiring and enrollment practices and data reporting. And focus the limited resources on ALL Wisconsin public schools, where the majority of our children are educated.

* "Revenues, Expenditures and Taxpayer Subsidies In Milwaukee's Voucher Schools"
by Nelson, Egan and Holmes (2000)

BUDGET HEARING
WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL
MILWAUKEE
APRIL 20, 2001

REVENUE CAPS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

My name is Jill North. I live in Richfield and my children attend school in the Germantown School District. About a decade ago the property tax payers of this state wanted tax relief and received it with the formulation of revenue caps for public education. The cost of per pupil spending was frozen in at the 1993 year costs. Now time has passed and the tables have turned. We the people of Wisconsin (47,000 PTA members) are speaking out on the damage this has caused public education.

Hopefully, you all have heard testimony and received feedback on how revenue caps have affected children. A parent from Stevens Point testified at the rally in Madison last January, reporting that students are being taught in a 77 year old building that had an out of date boiler and chicken wire on the ceiling to keep falling plaster in place. (We just recently tore down a stadium in Milwaukee that was newer than that.) An Appleton library has no budget for books and supplies. School districts with declining enrollments receive less dollars yet need to provide the same opportunities. The decreased enrollment does not necessarily from the same school and the same classroom or the same bus route. Thus cut backs come in the form of higher class sizes and no building maintenance budgets.

I consider the children in the area I live lucky, because we are fortunate enough to be in a community with a stable and increasing enrollment. We have not had to cut basic programing. However, with the \$220 freeze on the annual inflationary adjustment, we are on a collision course to our costs exceeding our financial resources. WI PTA passed a resolution 2 years ago to change/reform revenue caps. This budget is a step backwards, not forward, for children and education with this freeze on the annual adjustment.

I am here today, not only to speak on the current problems but also to take a proactive approach to reforming revenue caps before they are damaging to all school districts. Every school district in the state will eventually be in jeopardy. The cost to educate a child in the Germantown School District is about \$8,500. If the math is calculated, a \$220 annual adjustment is about 2.5%. This is not enough money to keep up with the rising costs.

As legislators, your response to us might be- use the referendum process to spend beyond the revenue caps. The problem with this is that it violates the principal of government by representation as established by our constitution. We recognize that the last election had many successful passings of referendums to exceed the caps. However, we are a democracy with elected school boards. Give the power back to the localities. The notion that one law or formula will fit all school districts is totally and democratically wrong. One size fits all is socialism, not democracy. How do you explain this to the veterans who fought in places like Korea and Vietnam to stop the spread of this type of government. How do you explain to the taxpayers that financed a cold war for forty five years that you are taking decision making away from their local School Boards and moving them to Madison. Isn't this the same intrusion of our democracy that we thought we defeated when the wall came down in Berlin. I hope that you as our representatives are looking at this issue with a historical perspective.

The price we pay for property tax relief will be far higher than any one intended for the children. Do not get caught up in a tax cut frenzy. Children are our most precious resource and our future. Do not sacrifice them and their potential.

Thank you for listening and we the WI PTA need change in funding for public education.

Jill North
WI PTA Region L Advisor
4325 Timber Dr.
Colgate, WI 53017
e-mail dnorth@netwurx.net

Friday, April 20, 2001

TO: Members of the Joint Finance Committee

RE: Special Education

Hello, my name is Gail Kolvenbach and I reside in St. Francis, Wisconsin. My husband and I have 4 children ranging in age from 10 to 15 years old. My eldest son Paul is Autistic and has been in the public school system since the age of 3.

I not only advocate for my son Paul but also volunteer as an advocate for all children. I am here representing the many children and parents who could not attend today.

A quality education for all students should be attainable in our schools. This is not the case in Wisconsin. I have heard over and over again from school administrators and frantic parents looking for help that the money is not in the budget. When a parent exercises their child's rights the district has to comply with the state and federal laws.

Special education students are not the only ones who suffer due to insufficient reimbursement to school districts. The district now has to make difficult decisions. Regular education programs are either cut or put in jeopardy and our children are then blamed for being a financial burden to the school district. For years parents of children with special needs have fought to dispel this negative image.

I am asking you today to help us in our fight and vote for reimbursement to school districts for 50% of special education costs with an additional 90% for the cost of services that exceed \$25,000. Should I not be successful today in convincing all of you that each child in Wisconsin has a right to a quality education, how will I and other parents be able to teach our children that everyone should be treated equally?

Thank you for your time.

Gail M. Kolvenbach
2908 East Armour Avenue
St. Francis, Wisconsin 53235
(414) 744-3053

Roxanne Starks
6614 N. 84th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53224

April 20, 2001

Testimony: Joint Finance Committee
Washington High School
Milwaukee, WI
April 20, 2001

Honorable Members of the Joint Finance Committee

Re: Board of Education and Accountability

The Department of Public Instruction functions as a resource and leader for many programs that help our children. From parental involvement to pre-college programs, everyone benefits from the hard work that the Department of Public Instruction does.

The Department of Public Instruction needs to continue to be the lead educational organization in Wisconsin that each and every one of us can turn to for all of the vital resources and help that they provide on a continuous basis.

A few years ago, the citizens were faced with a politically appointed Board of Education that the Governor wanted to take the place of the Department of Public Instruction. Now again, in this budget proposal we are looking at a politically appointed "Board" to handle the evaluation and accountability for K-12 education.

Wisconsin PTA strongly opposes this concept along with all the other budget recommendations that would in effect micro-manage this independent agency. This would not be in the best interest of our children.

Academic standards, curriculum, and assessment are all linked to each other and the oversight of all these functions need to remain within the Department of Public Instruction.

We need to remember that education is education, education is not politics. We must not put politics in education.

We the citizens of Wisconsin elect a superintendent of Public Instruction. This person directs an agency that has skilled individuals and resources needed to get the job done for education.

We don't need a politically appointed Board with their own private agenda that will be the weakest link for education.

Often times we place the cart before the horse. We must not try doing this again. We must look at the entire picture. First the horse, then the cart filled with individuals who are skilled, trained, and knowledgeable about education. We don't need "bean counters" that don't have a clue of what is best for our children.

Partnerships have been formed with the Department of Public Instruction from other educational organizations in the state as well as the Wisconsin PTA. These partnerships have been successful for all individuals.

The time is now to truly do what is best for the children, parents, teachers, and administrators of Wisconsin.

If we are going to move forward and provide the best possible education for our children, we must continue to have a strong Department of Public Instruction and let them continue in their role as the experts in education.

April 20, 2001

Good morning members of the Joint Committee on Finance:

My name is Maggie Lewis. I am an educator in the Muskego-Norway School District and I am one of the 365 Wisconsin teachers who was privileged to complete the training through the Wisconsin Academy Staff Development Initiative (WASDI). I am here today to speak in support of WASDI and the motion by Senator Shibilski that will provide funding to continue this outstanding, worthwhile program.

Thank you Senator Shibilski for recognizing the value of this outstanding program and the need to continue it. WASDI has been in existence for the last six years providing teachers throughout our state with state of the art professional development in the areas of science, mathematics, technology education and becoming lead teachers. Each of us who has been privileged to participate in this training has benefited more than we ever thought possible!

Personally, my training has afforded me the opportunity to move out of teaching in a primary classroom to working as a resource teachers for other teachers in our school and our district. The training I received in the Lead Teacher component of WASDI, led to my passion to help colleagues and ultimately tomorrow's leaders (our students) attain the best in math and science standards-based learning.

Being an educational leader is not an easy task. Our goals are regularly questioned by those people who do not walk or work in our daily world, but who believe, because they once were in school as a student, that they know better than we do.

As educational leaders, we, as WASDI lead teachers, regularly network with each other to continue building our knowledge base and to continue our sense of determinism to improve the educational system of Wisconsin's schools. I currently have my master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, 30 additional master hours and over an additional 200 CEU (clock hour equivalency units) toward my license recertification. The intensity of our WASDI training in math, science and technology was unlike any of my previous training. I believe it could not be duplicated by other post graduate course work. We were trained by some of the best leaders throughout the United States.

Six years ago, WASDI received a six million-dollar National Science Foundation grant to develop teaching centers or academies in up to ten sites around our state. This professional development program was modeled after the very successful Cray Academy in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin.

Since 1995, these academies have provided one week-long professional development opportunities (30 hours of direct instruction) for more than 12,000 Wisconsin teachers. Many of these opportunities were and will continue to be led by WASDI trained teachers like myself. We have been trained to provide leadership and staff development to our colleagues.

For the past eight years, the Wisconsin Academy Staff Development Initiative has been federally funded because it meets both critical national and state needs. This federal funding is ending. It is time for the State of Wisconsin, looked at for its high academic standards, to now pick up the financial responsibility for this successful program!

Please support the Senator Shibilski's motion to continue this critical program. The future of Wisconsin's high, standards-based learning in the areas of mathematics, science and technology is dependent on this highly acclaimed program!

Maggie Lewis
W133 S6526 Fennimore Lane
Muskego, WI

**Testimony Before The Committee On Joint Finance
Washington High School
April 20, 2001**

Submitted by

**Silver Spring Neighborhood Center
5460 N. 64th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53218
414-463-7950**

Contact Person: Jim Bartos, Executive Director

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and especially the youth members of Silver Spring Neighborhood Center (SSNC), we are thankful for the opportunity to address the Committee on Joint Finance regarding the strengths, interests and needs of youth in our neighborhood and City.

In the past year, Silver Spring Neighborhood Center, which is located in the middle of the Westlawn Housing Development on the Northwest side of Milwaukee, served more than 2,000 youth between the ages of 5-12 years with educational, recreational, social development, employment and a variety of prevention programs all designed to promote healthy growth and development leading to self-sufficiency. This is nearly double the number of youth served two years ago.

Nearly half of these youth (~1000) were involved in programming funded through either Safe & Sound or the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CLC) Initiative or a combination of the two. Safe & Sound helps fund youth activities at both Silver Spring Neighborhood Center and the John Muir Middle School where the CLC is located. The dollars from Safe & Sound and the CLC Initiative through MPS compliment each other and allow for a more comprehensive range of programs and services as well as extended hours of operation. In addition, SSNC receives some TANF Community Youth Grant dollars from the State to help support the Muir CLC and to fund a city-wide track and field team with a strong national reputation.

The positive impact of having 1,000 youth, mainly teens, who were previously unserved, participating in educational and youth development activities on a routine basis in our agency and at the Muir CLC during high crime hours after school and in the evening and on weekends (and having FUN) is immense. We have found that participating youth are doing better in school (better grades, better conduct, greater progress/achievement on proficiencies) and that crime statistics in our neighborhood are down significantly. In fact, Captain Vince Flores of the Fourth District Police Station located five blocks west of Silver Spring Neighborhood Center says that the Westlawn Housing Development is an *island of civility*. Safe & Sound, Silver Spring Neighborhood Center's TANF Community Youth Grant, and the CLC have clearly made a tremendous difference in Westlawn and the surrounding neighborhood.

It must also be mentioned that the Muir CLC provides a variety of educational and recreational programming for neighborhood adults as well as youth. Computer classes, cooking classes, aerobics, family movie nights are just a few of the popular offerings that adults can participate in.

The loss of funding through Safe & Sound, Community Learning Centers and TANF Community Youth Grant at Silver Spring Neighborhood Center would have a devastating effect on Silver Spring Neighborhood Center's ability to serve neighborhood youth living in the Westlawn Housing Development and surrounding neighborhood. This area has a very high concentration of youth and families living in poverty. Although the youth and their families live on the edge economically, they have tremendous personal resources that are being built even stronger every day through the programs and services supported by Safe & Sound, the CLC and TANF Community Youth Grant. These are some of the best spent dollars in the State's budget. They need to be continued and expanded where possible.



Law Librarians Association of Wisconsin

April 20, 2001

Joint Committee on Finance
Public Hearing
Washington High School
2525 N. Sherman Blvd.
Milwaukee, WI

The Law Librarians Association of Wisconsin (LLAW) is a chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries, an organization with over 5,000 members which represents law librarians and related professionals who are affiliated with a wide range of institutions: law firms; law schools; corporate legal departments; courts; and local, state and federal government agencies. As President of LLAW I represent over 100 Wisconsin law librarians from similar institutions.

I am writing to voice my concern over Governor Scott McCallum's proposed 5% budget cut for all state agencies. This budget cut would have a devastating effect on the State Law Library. This 5% cut, added to existing shortfalls, would cause the law library to face a shortage of almost \$150,000 in its book budget for 2001-2002.

Decreasing the State Law Library's book budget by that amount would greatly effect the library's ability to serve its users. Law libraries need to keep their collections current. Without the resources to keep the State Law Library's collection up to date, the library would become a large room filled with out-of-date books.

The State Law Library provides access to legal information for a varied clientele. In addition to serving the courts and the legislature, it provides assistance to patrons of both public libraries and academic libraries around Wisconsin. The library also provides a much needed service to pro se litigants all over the State by providing them with access to current legal information.

The State Law Library has many users who do not have local access to legal materials and have come to rely on the State Law Library as a gateway to legal information that would not be available to them elsewhere without considerable cost. The pro se litigant would be hindered in his pursuit of justice.

The biggest impact of cutting the budget of the State Law Library is that current legal information would no longer be readily accessible to the citizens of Wisconsin, whether they work in government, academia, public or private industry or whether they are students with a need to learn about our country's legal system and processes.

On behalf of the members of the Law Librarians Association of Wisconsin I urge the Committee to consider the importance of maintaining a collection of current legal materials which are readily accessible to the public and act to preserve the State Law Library's budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia A. Ellingson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Patricia A. Ellingson
President
Law Library Association of Wisconsin

***Joint Finance Committee Hearing
Washington High School
Milwaukee, Wi.
April 20,2001***

***Katherine Liddell
1809 Covered Bridge Road
Cedarburg, Wi,
53012***

As Title I Coordinator for Grafton Public Schools, I wish to state that the lack of funding that the non-fiscal k-12 policy items in the governor's budget would create and cause many problems for the pupils of the Wisconsin's school both private and public.

In small district such as Grafton, The caps and high cost of running the schools have already caused the taxpayers to pass referendums in order to try to meet the needs to the pupils. The added burdens of additional cost for special education, which this budget mandates, would mean less or no service for pupils and their families.

These budget items will not:

Keep working classrooms functioning

Maintain the quality of the teaching staff

Provide for the educational programs that benefit the community



April 20, 2001

My Name is Carol Masse and I am the Financial Aid Director at Concordia University in Mequon, Wisconsin. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to share with you the impact that the Wisconsin Tuition Grant has on our students.

64 % of the students attending Concordia University Wisconsin are Wisconsin residents. 21% were eligible to receive Wisconsin Tuition Grant this academic year. The average amount awarded was \$705. Of the recipients, 12% were students in the Adult Degree Completion program. This student population is awarded Federal and /or State grants only, therefore, rely heavily on these two programs to make college affordable. More importantly, our adult learners are our taxpayers. These Wisconsin Tuition Grant recipients are demonstrating to the youth of Wisconsin a commitment to improving themselves and our society through education. This grant definitely influenced the student in their decision to attend a Wisconsin Independent University.

Thank you on behalf of our students for the Wisconsin Tuition Grant and for the opportunity to express our need for continued support.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Carol Masse'.

Carol Masse
Director of Financial Aid

Hello, my name is Jason Lamar Carter, I am a junior at Marquette University majoring in advertising with minors in marketing and philosophy. I stand here before you because I am a recipient of the Wisconsin Tuition Grant. I feel it as an honor to have the opportunity to express my appreciation of this grant in front of the Joint Finance Committee. And although many recipients may be oblivious or naïve to what goes on behind the scenes of these vital decisions, I assure you that the Wisconsin Tuition Grant is indeed significant to the attainment of our private school education.

Personally, I am a student of the Educational Opportunity Program at Marquette. As a requirement of admission to this program, a student must be of low income and/or first generation status. Consequently, if there is no sufficient or adequate aid financially, then I would not be able to attend such as prestigious university where I've had invaluable learning experiences, academically, socially, and spiritually.

Again it is an honor to express my appreciation of the Wisconsin Tuition Grant before you. I have certainly reaped the benefits of its availability and so should many others: for in reality, a student's financial aid package can alter their college decision-making. And as we all know, a private school education is an expensive investment. And I believe firmly, that a student should not be robbed of opportunity simply because they are not financially fit.

Thank you for your time and patience.

Jason Lamar Carter



MARQUETTE
UNIVERSITY

To: Joint Finance Committee Members
Wisconsin State Legislature
Public Hearing at Washington High School

Date: April 20, 2001

Subject: Request for Support of Increased Funding for Wisconsin Tuition Grant (WTG)

I am present today at this public hearing to request your support for increased funding to WTG within the 2001-03 biennial budget. As Director of the Office of Student Financial Aid at Marquette University for more than 20 years, I have seen firsthand how this grant program for students from Wisconsin has been of tremendous assistance to needy families.

With me today are four current Marquette University students who are WTG recipients: Jason Carter, Rania Hamad, Timothy Kusik, and Bridget White-Robinson. Each of them will tell you how this grant program has assisted them.

Specific Points to Consider:

1. The Wisconsin Tuition Grant is a student financial aid program designed specifically for students from Wisconsin. During the current academic year, 1,611 needy students at Marquette are receiving \$3,292,888 in grants ranging from a minimum of \$250 to a maximum of \$2,300.
2. During the past ten years, funding for WTG has not kept pace with the financial need of students. In fact, the maximum award has increased just 15% in the past 20 years -from \$2,000 in 1981 to the current \$2,300.
3. Although the twenty-one independent colleges and universities in Wisconsin are private, they serve the important public purpose of educating one-quarter of the state's four-year degree-seeking students -more than 50,000 individuals.
4. Wisconsin's private colleges are places of opportunity. In the most recent year for which comparative statistics are available, the average family income of students attending a private college or university was less than that of UW System students.

Although I understand the Legislature must consider competing requests for limited available funding, I urge you to keep students first as compromises are made and priorities set.

Thank you for your attention and for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Daniel L. Goyette
Director
FAX 414-288-1718
VOICE 414-288-5261
EMAIL Dan.Goyette@marquette.edu

William & Elizabeth Zembrowski
1101 South 24 Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53204

Committee Members
Joint Finance Committee of the Wisconsin State Legislature
Presented at the hearing at
Washington High School
2525 N. Sherman Blvd.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53210

April 20, 2001

Dear Committee Members:

First, we would like to thank those of you who have supported the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in the past. We have three children attending schools through the Choice Program and one child whose attendance at a school outside of the Choice program is made possible because all of the money we can budget for education can be concentrated on him instead of being split between all four. We are very pleased with the quality education all of our children are receiving at the schools of our choice. We are as involved in those schools as is humanly possible and are encouraged by administration and staff to do so. We are happy that the values we are trying to pass on to our children are able to be reinforced in the school environment as well. We ask that you continue to support our ability to choose the schools that we feel are best for our children. We feel that the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program is the best means of ensuring that all children receive the highest quality education possible, regardless of their family's income, and has resulted in encouraging changes that have improved the quality of education throughout the Milwaukee Public Schools System as well.

Second, with the exception of the August 1st enrollment reporting requirement- something not required of public schools and very difficult to complete when dealing with families that may not even know where they will be living when school starts, much less which school they wish to enroll their children in- we would like to ask that you support the changes to the Choice plan proposed in the Executive Budget Bill.

Allowing families to remain in the program if their income rises slightly above the cutoff will bring a measure of relief to parents who feel it necessary to watch every penny they earn to maintain eligibility for their children's sake. The 175% of poverty limit is an arbitrary number that in no way reflects the reality of our lives. The private-pay cost of our children's education in the schools we have chosen for them would be \$10,000- that is 1/4 of our entire pre-tax income and far more than we could afford to pay and still provide them with the basic necessities of shelter and food for a family of six. We must weigh heavily the consequences of overtime, or a minor promotion that may add as little as a couple hundred to a thousand dollars in immediate benefits vs. the long-term loss of \$10,000 per year for our children's education. We do NOT believe the original intent of the authors of this program was to force families to forgo such a minor improvement in their present financial condition to ensure their children's educational future.

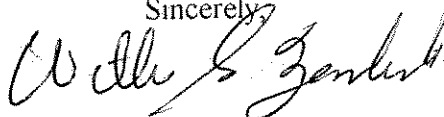
There has been speculation of families abusing the program by continuing to accept benefits if they had a major change in their financial situation, such as winning the lottery or receiving an inheritance. While the chances of this happening are so remote as to be ludicrous in the first place, and while no one would expect that same lottery winner to begin paying for their child's public school education, we believe you would find that the vast majority of parents presently participating in the program would gladly pay for the privilege of sending their children to the school of their choice if it was financially feasible, and allow another family to receive the benefits their children are presently gaining.

Raising the ceiling for eligibility to 185% of the federal poverty level will allow more families to take advantage of the program while still maintaining the spirit of helping poor families to give their children a quality education. As we said earlier, the 175% level is arbitrary and does not reflect the reality of our lives. The additional 10% income comes to between \$860 and \$2,500, depending on the size of the family, and doesn't come close to offsetting the \$10,000 in educational costs we previously discussed. These families are no more able to come up with the cost of private education at 185% than we are at 175% of the level. If the federal government believes they are deserving of assistance for something as small as help paying the cost of lunches for their children, we should consider them deserving of assistance in providing them with the ability to make the choice as to what is the best education for their children.

We believe these changes are just and fair and necessary to provide the State of Wisconsin with a well-educated population that will be in the best interests of everyone in the state, whether you live in the city of Milwaukee or not.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



William & Elizabeth Zembrowski



Testimony of Rachel Egen of People For the American Way in Opposition to Governor McCallum's proposed education budget for the SAGE and Milwaukee Voucher Programs

April 20, 2000

I would like to thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Joint Finance Committee for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Rachel Egen and I'm an education policy analyst with People For the American Way. PFAW has more than 6,000 members in Wisconsin, and has been actively involved in issues relating to public education in the state. I am here on behalf of our Wisconsin members to express our concern regarding Governor McCallum's proposed budget with respect to funding cuts to the SAGE class size reduction program and the simultaneous funding increase for the Milwaukee voucher program. We feel that these proposals punish success and reward unproven programs at the expense of Wisconsin's students. With the committee's permission we would like to submit our findings on the budget proposal for the public record. These findings are contained in our report, *PUNISHING SUCCESS: The Governor's Proposed Education Budget in Wisconsin and the SAGE and Voucher Programs*.

Our review of the Legislative Fiscal Bureau's summary of the Governor's proposed budget finds that this budget proposal would cut funding for SAGE by approximately \$31.6 million for the coming biennium. At the same time, the Governor's budget would increase funding for the Milwaukee private school voucher program by around the same amount—\$27.5 million.

As you are aware, the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education—or SAGE—program is a statewide program that reduces class sizes to a 15:1 student: teacher ratio in kindergarten through third grade and has a number of other features, such as providing services and extended hours to the community, rigorous curriculum standards and teacher evaluations. SAGE has a rigorous evaluation component built into the program and a proven track record, particularly in helping low-income and minority students achieve academic gains. Annual SAGE evaluations have shown that African American students in K-3 SAGE classrooms score higher on every subject test than their African American counterparts in comparison schools, and they have closed the achievement gap with their white classmates, unlike those in comparison schools, who have continued to fall further behind.

Full funding for all SAGE schools would require approximately \$53.7 million over base funding. Yet the Governor's budget would allocate just \$22.1 million, which represents a \$31.6 million dollar cut in program funding. The Governor proposes to radically restructure the program so that all SAGE schools with less than a 50% poverty rate that entered the program this year will only be able to reduce class sizes for kindergarten and 1st grades. They will *not* receive funding for 2nd and third grades.

There are currently 576 SAGE schools in the state. Of that number, about 500 joined the program this past year. The Governor's proposal would prohibit almost 400 of these schools from expanding this year from expanding SAGE to 2nd and 3rd grades, as provided by current law. Of these schools that would no longer receive funding past 1st grade, eight are in Milwaukee alone and at least half of these have poverty rates over 40 percent.

It is important to note in these discussions that while the poverty threshold for the schools has now become a factor in calculating aid, the *funding mechanism* remains the same: SAGE funding is based on the number of low-income students in the schools' K-3 classes. If a school elects to participate, they must reduce class size in all affected classes—not simply those with low-income students—and they receive \$2,000 per low-income student to do so.

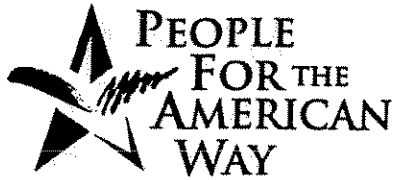
At the same time, the Governor's budget allocates an additional \$27.5 million to Milwaukee's private school voucher program above base funding. Unlike the SAGE program, the Milwaukee voucher program in this budget would receive full funding to cover the increase in enrollment. In addition, the Governor proposes to raise the student eligibility requirement from 175 percent to 185 percent of poverty level and to allow students to remain in the voucher program even if they are no longer eligible in later years. We find it disturbing that the Governor claims that Wisconsin is unable to fully fund an extremely successful statewide program with a proven track record, yet at the same time *increases* by roughly the same amount of money funding for a private voucher program with no track record, *no* evaluation since 1995 and indifferent results at best prior to the legislature's elimination of the academic evaluation in 1995.

The Governor has the opportunity to rectify some of the shortcomings of the voucher program in his budget proposal, among them the lack of an academic evaluation. The original voucher program did contain an academic evaluation component but that was eliminated in 1995 by the Legislature, which instead required an audit by the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau. That WLAB audit, released in February 2000, specifically noted that it was unable to document voucher students' academic achievement because there is no uniform testing requirement.

Yet this budget does not provide for testing or program evaluation. Instead, the Governor's proposal would remove academic assessment of all schools from the Department of Public Instruction and instead create an appointed Board on Education Evaluation and Accountability. The Governor alone would appoint the Board's five members, and only one of these would be required to have any experience in academic evaluation and assessment. Under this proposal, private schools would still not be required to administer the same tests as public schools, although they are given the option to do so. However, if they choose to participate, the Board is *specifically prohibited* from releasing private voucher schools' school level test score data. This runs counter to the stated purpose of the program as one based on informed parental choice. This aspect of the Governor's proposal should also be rejected.

Nor does the Governor's budget proposal rectify the taxpayer overpayments brought to the public's attention last year by People For the American Way Foundation. The Legislative Audit Bureau's February 2000 demonstrated that Wisconsin taxpayers pay on average 40 percent less than a private citizen pays for the same school. Elimination of this funding loophole alone—estimated at approximately \$50 million—would more than cover the cuts to the SAGE program.

In sum, we strongly oppose the substantial cuts in SAGE, a proven program that has demonstrated its success in raising academic achievement of low-income and minority students, at the same time as the proposed increase of roughly the same amount of funding to pay tuition at private schools in Milwaukee that cannot even be evaluated. For the sake of the taxpayers and students of Wisconsin, we urge you to remedy these serious defects in the Governor's budget proposals. Thank you very much.



PUNISHING SUCCESS:

*The Governor's Proposed Education Budget
in Wisconsin and the SAGE
and Voucher Programs.*

Parents, civic leaders, educators and others throughout Wisconsin have raised serious concerns about the adequacy and equity of education funding in Governor McCallum's proposed budget for the 2001-03 biennium. Perhaps nowhere are the problems in the Governor's budget more clearly revealed than in the provisions that cut back SAGE—a popular and successful statewide class size reduction program for poor children—but continue to increase funding for the Milwaukee private school voucher program. In fact, the budget shortfall for SAGE—\$31.6 million—is about the same as the increase in funding for Milwaukee's private school vouchers—at \$27.5 million. In effect, the cuts to this statewide public school program help fund private school vouchers in a single district. Indeed, even eliminating extra spending for the voucher program beyond the cost of private school tuition could be more than enough to restore the cutbacks in SAGE funding.

This analysis focuses on two aspects of the Governor's budget proposal with respect to SAGE and the Milwaukee voucher program: funding and program evaluation. The budget's decreased commitment to SAGE, as opposed to fully funding the voucher program, parallels the Governor's academic evaluation plan. The quality of SAGE (along with other public school) assessments are seriously at risk as a result of the Governor's proposed creation of a politically-appointed assessment board. Even worse, the voucher program would retain its special status as a publicly-funded state program with virtually no academic accountability, no program evaluation component and no student testing requirements. Both with respect to funding and evaluation of SAGE and vouchers, the Governor's budget would seriously harm education for many Wisconsin students.

THE SAGE AND THE VOUCHER PROGRAMS:

The SAGE (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education) Program

SAGE is a statewide program that enjoys strong bipartisan support and has demonstrated success in improving academic performance for low-income and minority students. Started in 1996 and targeted to low-income students in grades K-3, SAGE reduces class sizes to a 15:1 ratio. K-1 classes are reduced in year one, K-2 in year two, and K-3 in years 3-5. In the program's first year, school districts possessing one school with at least a 50% student poverty rate were eligible to apply for SAGE funding for that school or any school in the district with a poverty rate of at least 30 percent. Since then, the program has expanded so that almost any school was able to apply in the 2000-01 school year.¹

The funding mechanism, however, remains the same: funding is calculated on the number of low-income students in the school for grades K-3. SAGE provides participating schools with \$2,000 per low-income student to reduce classes to 15 pupils per teacher and requires participating schools to hold extended hours and provide community services to district residents. SAGE program guidelines also require the development of rigorous curriculum and staff development, and assessment systems. Approximately 60,000 students statewide participate in SAGE.²

In a recent evaluation involving SAGE and comparison schools, 29 of the top 30 classrooms in terms of student achievement in language arts, reading and math were SAGE classrooms. The achievement gap in language arts and math between African American and white first grade students was *reduced* in SAGE classrooms while it *increased* in comparison schools. African American second and third grade students in SAGE schools scored higher on every test than did African American students in the comparison schools.³

These findings are consistent with what has been learned from a comparable Tennessee class size reduction experiment, STAR. Researchers there have followed the progress of students who were in small K-3 classes in 1985-89, and then returned to regular-sized classes, compared with students in regular-sized classes all the way from K-12. Not only did those who were in small classes in K-3 outperform their peers in large classes during those years, but even afterwards they continued to outpace them in math, reading and science through 8th grade—and the *gap* between the small and regular-class test results increased as time went on as well.⁴ In high school, those who had been in small K-3 classes had lower retention rates and were more likely to graduate and take advanced math and English courses, even while maintaining higher GPAs.⁵ STAR project small-class students were also more likely to take college entrance exams than their regular-class peers.⁶ Consistently, too, all of these benefits are even more evident for minority and disadvantaged students. For example, the black/white gap in the probability of taking the ACT or SAT test for college entrance was cut in half for those who had been in small classes, and ACT scores themselves for blacks who had been in small classes were notably higher than for blacks who had been in large classes.⁷

Milwaukee Voucher Program

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, started in 1990, is the nation's first publicly-funded voucher program. Also designed to target low-income students—originally defined as those whose family income did not exceed 175% of the poverty rate—the program provides state taxpayer funds to be used for tuition at private and religious schools in Milwaukee. Originally funded entirely through Milwaukee's portion of general school state aid, half the program is now funded by a reduction in state aid to the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), and the other half through a reduction in general state aid to Wisconsin's other 425 school districts. For the 2001-02 school year, this amounts to a \$29.3 million reduction for MPS and \$29.3 million reduction for Wisconsin's 425 other districts.⁸

Unlike the SAGE program, the Milwaukee voucher program has not been evaluated since 1995, when the Legislature eliminated the academic evaluation requirement for the program. Instead, the Legislature provided only for a single audit by the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau (WLAB) in the year 2000. In this audit, the state auditor specifically noted that "Some hopes for the program—most notably, that it would increase participating students' academic achievement—cannot be documented, largely because uniform testing is not required in participating schools."⁹ The audit also pointed out its inability to ascertain the progress of special education students in the voucher schools due to the fact that voucher schools are not required to identify and report students with special needs.¹⁰

The state superintendent of education expressed similar concerns regarding the voucher program's lack of accountability in his response to the WLAB audit: "We believe there is a compelling public interest in evaluating the educational outcomes of the program and reporting those outcomes to the legislature and the parents who are considering the program for their children. Requiring participating Choice schools to administer the state's standardized tests to Choice pupils would provide the schools with a useful tool to measure individual student achievement as well as provide legislators and others with valuable comparative information about individual MPCP [voucher] schools and the Milwaukee Public Schools." Noting that Wisconsin has made a considerable investment in assessment, he stated that: "The department believes this same level of accountability should be required of private schools participating in the Choice program. I believe the legislature should address this issue in future deliberations about the program."¹¹

Prior to the legislature's elimination of the academic evaluation in 1995, the state had commissioned Professor John Witte at the University of Wisconsin at Madison to direct the evaluation of the Milwaukee voucher program. Witte found no appreciable academic gains for students in the voucher program in his five-year evaluation.¹² Pro-voucher researcher Paul Peterson reevaluated Witte's findings and claimed to find a statistically significant gain for voucher students in the third and fourth years of the program,¹³ an assessment disputed by many in the research community, who explained that by the third year the control and experimental groups were not comparable, and that by the third year those who remained were an academically superior subset, not a random sample.¹⁴ A third study by Princeton researcher Cecilia Rouse corroborated Witte's findings in that she found no differences between MPS and voucher reading gains, but did find a small increase in voucher math achievement.¹⁵ One of her most interesting (and least discussed) findings is that, controlling for student characteristic variables, Milwaukee public schools that have small class sizes and additional state funding that serve low-income populations keep pace with voucher schools in math gains and substantially outpace them in reading.¹⁶

Despite the lack of conclusive evidence about the academic value of the voucher program, and the recommendation of the state's own superintendent of education, the lack of voucher program evaluation would not change under the Governor's proposed budget. As discussed further below, the Governor would merely provide private schools with the *option* of participating in tests that public schools must take. If private schools choose to do so, the state would administer and grade tests.¹⁷

PROGRAM FUNDING:

SAGE:

Despite the proven success of SAGE, Gov. McCallum's budget proposes to substantially cut the program for 80% of the schools that elected to participate this year. The budget would eliminate the current SAGE law provision that class size be reduced annually for grades K-3 for all participating schools. In Gov. McCallum's budget, schools with poverty rates of less than 50% that entered the program this past year would

be prohibited from reducing class sizes beyond 1st grade through SAGE. These schools would *not* receive funding for class size reduction in 2nd and 3rd grades for coming years, even though that funding would still have been based on low-income student enrollment within those schools.

There are currently 576 SAGE schools in the state. Of this number, approximately 500 are new, having joined SAGE in the 2000-01 school year. Under the Governor's budget, approximately 400 of these 500 of these new schools—fully 80%—would be prohibited from expanding their 15:1 class sizes to 2nd and 3rd grade in the program.¹⁸

The cost to implement SAGE for the coming biennium under current law is approximately \$53.7 million over the base funding of \$58.7 million.¹⁹ In order for all new participating schools to reduce class sizes in 2nd grade next year and 3rd grade in the following years in accordance with SAGE law, approximately \$17.3 million is needed for 2001-02 and \$36.4 million the following years.²⁰

The Governor's budget, however, allocates just \$6.6 million for the 2001-02 school year and \$15.5 million for the following year—a total increase of just \$22.1 million over base funding.²¹ This lower figure is based on capping the program at K-1 for almost 400 schools. This, therefore, represents a cutback of approximately \$31.6 million dollars. The result for these schools is to cut in half a successful program. Although the budget does contain some positive changes, such as the deletion of the "sunset" provision (thereby making SAGE a permanent program) and allowing schools to renew their SAGE contracts,²² the proposed cutback substantially undermines the ability of the program to function as it was designed to do.

Milwaukee Voucher Program

In contrast to SAGE, the Governor's proposed budget calls for full and substantially increased funding for the Milwaukee voucher program. The program's base funding for 2001-02 is \$49.7 million. Based on a projected enrollment increase to 10,580 in 2001-02 and 11,850 in 2002-03—factoring in the per pupil state aid increase of \$220—the Governor will provide \$8.9 million in 2001-02 and \$18.6 million the following year above base funding. The Governor's total allocation comes to an additional \$27.5 million for the biennium over base funding.²³

The Governor also proposes to raise the income cap for eligible students from 175% of poverty rate to 185% of the poverty rate. This expansion of the program to higher-income students echoes earlier attempts to remove the income cap altogether. Furthermore, the Governor also proposes to allow students whose families no longer meet the income limit to stay in the voucher program in later years if they were eligible when they started.²⁴ In other words, taxpayers across the state may find themselves paying private school tuition for middle-class students in Milwaukee.²⁵

Yet the Governor's budget does nothing to correct highly questionable expenditures in the voucher program. As the program stands now, state taxpayers pay an average of 40% more for tuition than a private individual would pay at the very same school.²⁶ This is due to the fact that the voucher program requires the state to pay for

private school per-pupil expenditures as opposed to the tuition that private citizens pay for the very same schools. This is a boon to private schools but does not in any way aid the voucher students themselves. In fact, the elimination of this loophole that allows private schools to collect taxpayer money above tuition *alone* would account for approximately \$50 million over the biennium—more than enough to cover the SAGE cutback with millions to spare.²⁷ Nor does the Governor's budget address the fact that the voucher law in effect aids private schools in augmenting or even purchasing buildings at taxpayer expense by allowing these schools to depreciate 100% of their building assets upon entering the program.²⁸

PROGRAM EVALUATION:

The Governor's budget proposes major revisions with regard to academic evaluation. Under current law the Department of Public Instruction is responsible for evaluating all schools (including the SAGE program), identifying low-performing schools, and administering pupil assessments. The Governor's budget creates a new "Board on Education Evaluation and Accountability" under the Department of Administration. This removes all assessment and academic evaluation from the Department of Public Instruction. This Board would not only be responsible for evaluating the SAGE program but would also administer the pupil assessment program for the entire state.²⁹

Interestingly, the five-member board would be appointed by the Governor, and would *not* require Senate confirmation.³⁰ Even more disturbing for a Board whose primary purpose is to evaluate academic achievement, only one member of the Board would be required to have any experience in education evaluation and assessment.

By contrast, the Board would have no evaluative authority over the voucher program. The Board would be required to provide assessments to Milwaukee's private voucher schools only if those schools choose to administer state assessments, but may not require private schools to do so.³¹ In fact, the Board is specifically *prohibited* from disclosing the results of any exams administered by private voucher schools except in the aggregate.³² In other words, the Board may not release school-level test scores for private schools, although all public school scores are a matter of public record. Given that voucher advocates tout vouchers as a market-based reform, this prohibition against the release of test scores begs the question: if a market-based reform like vouchers is based on parental satisfaction and the ability to evaluate and choose a product based on performance, doesn't the prohibition on publicizing test scores directly contradict the stated intent of the program?

As has been the case since 1995 when the Legislature eliminated the academic evaluation component of the voucher program, the Governor's budget proposal allows the voucher program to continue without any evaluation. In fact, the Board is only authorized to do a study of the voucher program *if* the Board receives sufficient funds from private sources to do so.³³ Beyond the question as to whether it is appropriate for a state to base program assessment on the availability of private funding, Wisconsin's past history with privately-funded assessments should raise a red flag. When the official

evaluator of the voucher program found no academic gains for voucher students from the program's inception through 1995, pro-voucher researcher Paul Peterson was contracted by voucher supporters to re-evaluate the program. His more positive findings have spurred controversy but have not served to clarify the program's progress.

Furthermore, the reliance on private funding opens the door to bias. One can easily imagine a scenario in which a pro-voucher governor appoints a pro-voucher Board which solicits a funder such as the Milwaukee-based Bradley Foundation (whose president once stated that its \$10 million in contributions over the past thirteen years helped make vouchers a reality)³⁴ to contract an evaluation with a pro-voucher think tank.

CONCLUSION:

SAGE is a statewide program that has both a proven track record in helping low-income and minority students, as well as strong bipartisan support. In contrast, the Milwaukee voucher program has no proven track record—in part because the program itself lacks adequate accountability provisions—and is politically divisive. It takes money away from aid to public schools across the state and gives it to private schools for a small number of students.

Although SAGE is targeted to low-income students, the program has the added benefit of aiding *all* students in that class *regardless* of income by providing them with a better learning environment. In contrast, the Milwaukee private school voucher program removes individual students from their public school classrooms while doing nothing for their classmates. In fact, the voucher program not only fails to aid the majority of public school students, it actively harms them by reducing state aid to their schools and school districts.

Regardless of one's views regarding the Milwaukee voucher program, the Governor's proposed increase for voucher funding and simultaneous cutbacks to SAGE reward an unproven program and punish success. This budget substantially cuts an extremely successful program that helps low-income and minority students throughout Wisconsin and contains a rigorous evaluation component built into it. At the same time and by about the same amount of money, the Governor's budget increases taxpayer funding for a private school voucher program with no measurable track record, and in fact expands the program to include higher-income students. The voucher program would continue without required evaluation or accountability measures despite the recommendations by both the state auditor and the superintendent of public instruction to the contrary. And the budget does nothing to correct the taxpayer payments to private schools that exceed tuition. The Governor's budget for education is, in sum, bad for Wisconsin taxpayers and worse for Wisconsin's students.

ENDNOTES

¹ Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) –FACT SHEET—April 13, 2001, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

² Schools that elect to participate in SAGE must reduce class sizes for all students throughout the grade, not simply in those classes with low-income students since to do otherwise would result in economic segregation of students. SAGE therefore has a multiplier effect, helping all students at that grade level. Approximately 28,000 low-income students are included in the approximately 60,000 students who are in 15:1 classes through SAGE. As per the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, April 2001.

³ Alex Molnar, Philip Smith, and John Zahorik, "1998-99 Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program Evaluation," Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 1999; Alex Molnar, Philip Smith, and John Zahorik, "1999-2000 Evaluation Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program," Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 2000.

⁴ Debra Viadero, "Tennessee Class-size Study Finds Long-term Benefits," *Education Week*, May 5, 1999; "Benefits of Small Classes Pay Off at Graduation," *Project STAR News*, Lebanon, TN: Health and Education Research Operative Services (HEROS), Inc., April 1999.

⁵ Helen Pate-Bain, B. DeWayne Fulton, and Jayne Boyd-Zaharias, "Effects of Class-size Reduction in the Early Grades (K-3) on High School Performance: Preliminary Results (1999) from Project STAR, Tennessee's Longitudinal Class-size Study," Lebanon, TN: Health and Education Research Operative Services (HEROS), Inc., April 1999; "Benefits of Small Classes Pay Off at Graduation," *Project STAR News*, Lebanon, TN: Health and Education Research Operative Services (HEROS), Inc., April 1999.

⁶ Alan B. Krueger and Diane M. Whitmore, "Would Smaller Classes Help Close the Black-White Achievement Gap?" Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, January 2001.

⁷ *ibid.* A recent report by the pro-voucher Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (WPRI), in making the case that there is no SAGE impact on student achievement beyond first grade, seeks to link this claim to what it argues are similar limitations in the results from the Tennessee STAR experiment. Charles M. Achilles, STAR Principal Investigator, has pointed out that the WPRI report ignored many important publications on STAR from the last several years and, instead, relied on the work of Erik Hanushek and his now widely-criticized methods to make the argument that class size reduction is not a cost-effective intervention. By so doing, they have discounted the overwhelming evidence that for students who spend three or four years in smaller classes the positive benefits on student achievement and educational outcomes are both immediate and long-lasting. See Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, "The costs and benefits of smaller classes in Wisconsin: A further evaluation of the SAGE program," *Wisconsin Policy Research Institute Report*, vol. 13, no. 6, September 2000; Charles M. Achilles, "A review of 'The costs and benefits of smaller classes in Wisconsin,'" Education Policy Project, Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, September, 2000.

⁸ 2001-03 Wisconsin State Budget Summary of Governor's Budget Recommendations, Legislative Fiscal Bureau, March, 2001, p.p. 544-545.

⁹ Letter of Transmittal for *An Evaluation: Milwaukee Parental Choice Program*, Janice Mueller, State Auditor to Senator Gary R. George and Representative Carol Kelso, Co-Chairpersons, Joint Legislative Audit Committee, February 2, 2000.