



CHRIS KAPENGA

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Testimony on Senate Bill 467

Senate Committee on Education

January 21st, 2016

Thank you Chairman Olsen and committee members for hearing testimony today on SB 467. I also want to thank Representative Katsma for leading on this legislation in the Assembly.

SB 467 recognizes Christian Schools International (CSI) as an accreditation agency in statute, along with several other agencies, for participation in school choice programs in Wisconsin. This bill also adds (CSI) to the list of entities that qualifies private schools to participate in the Special Needs Scholarship program.

Currently, CSI is recognized by the Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation agency (WRISA) and was formerly a member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA), which has the authority to recognize accreditation agencies in the State of Wisconsin. CSI used to be a member of NCPSA but has recently withdrawn its membership. When CSI voluntarily left NCPSA, they unknowingly lost their ability to accredit schools in Wisconsin. CSI voluntarily withdrew its membership from NCPSA, along with many other Christian school accreditors, due to the changing landscape of schools in the nation. Many agencies are shifting to becoming state recognized as opposed to membership driven. CSI, along with other accrediting agencies, saw an ability to forgo the differences in philosophy as well as to alleviate the added headaches in the form of fees and additional red tape that come with working as a member to a larger organization.

CSI has been recognized in Wisconsin by several accrediting agencies such as WRISA, NCPSA, AdvancED, and the Wisconsin North Central Association. In Iowa, Illinois, and Kansas, CSI is recognized as an independent accrediting agency and is accrediting schools in 21 states with more in the works. They have been around for over 100 years and have been overwhelmingly recognized as a reputable accrediting agency, including here in Wisconsin already. This bill will continue to allow CSI to accredit schools in the state of Wisconsin without having to jump through the hoops of going through a different organization.

I urge your support of this bill. Thank you Mr. Chair and I would be happy to answer any questions.



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Date: January 21, 2016
To: Senate Committee on Education
From: Representative Terry Katsma
Re: Senate Bill 467: Christian Schools International Accreditation

Dear Chairman Olsen and Committee Members,

Thank you for convening a public hearing on Senate Bill 467, a bill that would add Wisconsin to the long list of states that recognize Christian Schools International's (CSI's) accreditation program on its own merits.

CSI was founded in 1920 and was the first national organization to serve Christian schools in the United States. Several well-respected schools in the communities I represent (including Oostburg Christian School and Sheboygan County Christian High School) have been CSI member schools since they were founded decades ago; another, Sheboygan Christian School, was a founding member of CSI in 1920.

Until CSI elected in 2012 not to continue its paid membership in the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA), its accredited Wisconsin schools qualified automatically for our state's various parental school choice programs. This decision was made partly due to cost and partly due to a changing national paradigm as to how accrediting agencies' partnerships are organized. **Wisconsin's CSI-accredited schools still qualify today for Wisconsin school choice programs, but individual schools now have to take unnecessary extra steps and pay an additional cost to document their accreditation through a third party.**

CSI Accreditation is recognized today in 21 other states including neighbors such as Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan and South Dakota. Two more states (including Minnesota) will recognize CSI Accreditation soon. In fact, Wisconsin is the only state in which CSI's choice to discontinue its NCPSA membership resulted in the loss of state recognition. Passage of this bill into law would enable CSI-accredited schools—like most other private schools in Wisconsin—to file only one accreditation report each year with one accrediting agency, thereby saving these schools money and cutting through unnecessary red tape in the documentation of their existing state approval.

CSI's accreditation protocol compares favorably with the many other accrediting agencies whose member schools are not required to undertake the extra steps toward state recognition that now burden CSI-accredited schools. I urge you to support CSI Accreditation's application to resume its state-approved status in Wisconsin.

To: Senate Committee on Education

From: Dee Pettack, Legislative Liaison

Date: January 21, 2016

Re: Statement for Information on Senate Bill 467

Senate Bill 467 (SB 467) adds Christian Schools International (CSI) to Wisconsin's statutory lists for approved accrediting agencies for the purposes of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, the Racine Parental Choice Program, and the statewide parental choice program and the Special Needs Scholarship program.

Currently the following accrediting agencies are available to private schools participating in the voucher programs:

1. Wisconsin North Central Association.
2. Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation.
3. Independent Schools Association of the Central States.
4. Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation.
5. National Lutheran School Accreditation.
6. Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools.
7. The diocese or archdiocese within which a private school is located.
8. Any other organization recognized by the National Council for Private Schools.

CSI's website lists the private schools it has accredited in Wisconsin. The table below provides the name of each private school accredited by CSI, whether the school participates in the choice programs, and whether the school is fully accredited by another accrediting entity under current law. According to the Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation's (WRISA's) webpage every school currently accredited by CSI is also accredited by WRISA, a current accrediting organization for private school choice programs.

Schools Currently Accredited by CSI

School Name	Choice Program Participant	Other Accreditation
Brookfield Christian School	No	WRISA
CrossTrainers Academy	Yes	WRISA
Osstburg Christian School	Yes	WRISA
Randolph Christian School	No	WRISA
Sheboygan County Christian High School	Yes	WRISA
Central Wisconsin Christian School	Yes	WRISA
Delavan Christian School	No	WRISA
Racine Christian School	No	WRISA
Sheboygan Christian School	Yes	WRISA

A list of schools that have been previously accredited by CSI and their status are listed below:

<u>School Name</u>	<u>Current Status</u>
King's Academy	Converted to a Charter authorized by the City of Milwaukee.
LifeSkills Academy	Terminated from Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.
More than Conquerors Prep School	Terminated from Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.
Whole Village Institute	Withdrew from the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.