

My name is Jane Heibel and I am here as a representative of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. We would like to voice our support for this resolution to improve the personal money management skills of Wisconsin high school students. We want to be a part of this effort to better prepare young people for the challenges of managing their financial affairs through education.

Family and Consumer Education is my background and as a vocational education teacher, I have always known the importance of teaching the application of money management skills in the classroom. I am very excited about the prospect of teaching a personal money management course to juniors and seniors. I have had concerns for a long time as a teacher and as a parent about the ease of getting credit without the knowledge to manage credit. We need to work together to build a base of knowledge through the teaching of financial literacy programs. And the best goal is an agreed upon comprehensive approach.

The creation of a task force or study committee involving several agencies and interests is an appropriate vehicle to address this issue. Each partner in this task force has a unique approach with different perspectives to bring to the table. Less duplication of effort would be the result of a task force effort. Many resources are available now and we need to work together and pool these resources. Expertise from a number of different agencies will produce the best product. Another positive result of this task force would be that all the parties involved would buy into and promote the finished study report if they had a hand in compiling the task force recommendations. These are all good reasons to support the task force approach to this issue.

Several activities are already being done at the Dept of Public Instruction. Curriculum is being developed and disseminated at our yearly summits in the area of Consumer Education. We have worked with our teachers to utilize a High School Financial Planning Program by the National Endowment for Financial Education offered to our Family and Consumer educators in partnership with the Cooperative Extension System. These are just two examples of what work is already being done and could be worked into one initiative.

The economy is complex and we need to equip Wisconsin High School students with the knowledge they need to be wise consumers and good money managers. Fostering the teaching of financial literacy programs in Wisconsin High Schools will help insure better financial futures for all. The Department of Public Instruction has a lot to offer this initiative and should be a part of this valuable educational program.

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