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Details: Public Hearing – February 21, 2008

(FORM UPDATED: 07/12/2010)

**WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ...  
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS**

**2007-08**

(session year)

**Senate**

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

**Committee on ... Education (SC-Ed)**

**COMMITTEE NOTICES ...**

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**
- Record of Comm. Proceedings ... **RCP**

**INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL**

- Appointments ... **Appt**
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule**
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions
  - (**ab** = Assembly Bill)                      (**ar** = Assembly Resolution)                      (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
  - (**sb** = Senate Bill)                              (**sr** = Senate Resolution)                      (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

## Vote Record Committee on Education

Date: 3/6/08

Moved by: Kreitlow      Seconded by: Hansen

AB \_\_\_\_\_      SB 349      Clearinghouse Rule \_\_\_\_\_  
 AJR \_\_\_\_\_      SJR \_\_\_\_\_      Appointment \_\_\_\_\_  
 AR \_\_\_\_\_      SR \_\_\_\_\_      Other \_\_\_\_\_

A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_  
 A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_ to A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_  
 A/S Sub Amdt \_\_\_\_\_  
 A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_ to A/S Sub Amdt \_\_\_\_\_  
 A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_ to A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_ to A/S Sub Amdt \_\_\_\_\_

Be recommended for:  
 Passage       Adoption       Confirmation       Concurrence       Indefinite Postponement  
 Introduction       Rejection       Tabling       Nonconcurrence

<u>Committee Member</u>	<u>Aye</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Not Voting</u>
<b>Senator John Lehman, Chair</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Senator Jon Erpenbach</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Senator David Hansen</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Senator Pat Kreitlow</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Senator Luther Olsen</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Senator Glenn Grothman</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Senator Mary Lazich</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Totals:</b>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	_____	_____

Motion Carried

Motion Failed



# LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

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HERE TO SERVE YOU!

**Senate Committee on Education  
Testimony of Senator Lena C. Taylor  
SB 349-Transcript Accountability Act  
February 21, 2008**

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As the Senate author on this critical legislation, thank you for the opportunity to speak to a serious problem plaguing our current Parental Choice Program. Initially becoming aware of this problem when a number of parents contacted my office, I simply could not and will not overlook the devastating impact, that the lack of proper record keeping by some Choice schools, have caused.

To ask a child to come to school, work hard, excel and do well, culminating with either advancement to the next grade level or graduation, and then to lose, mishandle, not make available, or discard proof of that student's work or that they ever attended the Choice school is unconscionable.

Yet we have numerous and clear examples of this absurdity everyday! There is a presumption, whether in a doctor's office, banking establishment, or employment situation, that accurate records that reflect our personal information will be kept in order and made available upon demand.

So imagine the horror of a child, that has completed the necessary graduation requirements from a Choice school, learning that their college admission has been denied because the institution can not obtain the necessary proof of their records, grades, yet alone graduation.

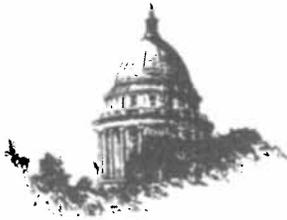
Imagine further, that same child being told, that they will also have to enroll in the local technical college and take high school classes to be considered for college enrollment in the future.

Whether it is, graduation, transfers between schools, or changes in attendance from a Choice school back to a Milwaukee Public school, many children are suffering from a gap in the law that leaves them unprotected from adults who willfully place their academic futures in jeopardy.

SB 349 will protect the many children and their families, who participate in the Choice program, from a similar fate. By requiring that schools maintain progress records for each student, for at least five years, and transfer those records to Milwaukee Public Schools, should that Choice school close, only make sense. Who could argue with a requirement to issue a diploma or certificate of completion after a student has met the necessary requirements for high school graduation.

Therefore, I strongly urge passage of this bill. I want, what we all should want...for Wisconsin children and their families to be assured, that not only does their education come with choices, it also comes with some guarantees.





Wisconsin State Senate

**John Lehman**

Senator – 21st District

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State Capitol • PO Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882 • (608) 266-1832 • Toll-free: 1-866-615-7510

**TESTIMONY OF SENATOR JOHN LEHMAN  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
February 21, 2008 – PUBLIC HEARING  
SENATE BILL 349**

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony on Senate Bill 349, which would require schools within the Milwaukee Public Choice Program to retain records for their students.

When a choice school closes, students who attended those schools could be left without any record of the classes they have taken or the grades they received. Students who have attended choice schools need that documentation for a variety of reasons, including applying for college.

This legislation was drafted with the intent of protecting the records of choice school students. It would ensure the following:

- Choice schools would need to provide all students with proof of graduation from high school
- Choice schools would be required to keep transcripts for all students (courses taken, grades, attendance, etc.) while the student is attending the school and for at least 5 years thereafter and would be required to make them available, upon request, to a pupil or a pupil's parent if the pupil is a minor
- Choice schools would be required to transfer pupil records to another school or school district if the pupil transfers
- If a choice school closes, the school would be required to transfer all transcripts to Milwaukee Public Schools

It's a simple bill, and it makes sure kids have something to show for the work they put in at school as they move forward in life. I hope those kids can count on your support of this important legislation. At this time, we would be happy to take whatever questions members may have.



A QUALITY  
EDUCATION  
FOR  
**EVERY**  
CHILD



## State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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Senate Committee on Education  
February 21, 2008

### Department of Public Instruction Testimony on 2007 Senate Bill 349

Thank you to Chairperson Lehman and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Jennifer Kammerud. I am the legislative liaison for the Department of Public Instruction and am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 349 (SB 349).

Records required to be kept by private schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program under SB 349 include courses taken and grades received, as well as records regarding attendance, immunizations, and extracurricular activities. These records are critical to the educational success of a student as well as a student's well-being. Without immunization records a school does not know who may be at risk when certain illnesses sweep through a population. Without records related to attendance it is difficult for schools to determine if there is a pattern of truancy. Without records regarding courses and grades it is difficult to track academic progress and plan appropriately so that students can achieve subject mastery and ultimately graduate. Schools providing a quality education should be keeping these records.

The department has received inquiries from students and their parents regarding access to records when choice schools have closed. In situations where there were records, we worked with Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to allow for the transfer of records to MPS. The department feels MPS is a logical repository for these records.

The requirement that high school diplomas or certificates must be issued is a necessary one. The department regularly receives calls from students who claim to have graduated from a private school in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program but who do not have a diploma, certificate, or transcripts. These students are left unable to apply for certain jobs and have difficulties accessing post-secondary education.

A successful school should be meeting the requirements contained in this bill. These records are important and need to be kept.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.





# **SONDY POPE-ROBERTS**

**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**

**Testimony  
February 21, 2008**

## **SENATE BILL 349, ASSEMBLY BILL 391**

**Thank you Chairman Lehman and Committee Members for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 349. As you may know, I am the author of the Assembly version of this bill, AB 391.**

**Several years ago, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel ran a very disturbing story which outlined the struggles of a Milwaukee voucher school student who was unable to apply for entrance into college because she couldn't access her high school transcripts. This young woman had completed the school's requirement for graduation and was unaware that there was going to be any difficulty in producing her transcripts.**

**While attempting to enroll into college, she spent many months, without success, trying to secure her transcripts. At some point she simply asked for proof that she had even attended high school at Learning Enterprise, the specific voucher school she had attended. Despite her repeated efforts, she received nothing from this school and, understandably, nearly gave up on attending college and furthering her education.**

**Eventually it was suggested that she apply to Milwaukee Technical College in order to attain a GED and become eligible to apply for college entrance. Imagine the disappointment this young woman faced in having to pay to secure a GED after having just graduated from high school!**

**The reason this young woman, and others like her, could not have access to her transcripts was simply because the Milwaukee Parental Choice school she attended and entrusted with her future, had kept no record of which classes she completed or the grades she earned. In fact, there was no proof she had even attended high school.**

**Unfortunately, this story is not unique. Voucher schools are not required to have licensed teachers, they don't have to adhere to the state standards, they don't have to administer the state tests required of public schools, and they are not required to keep these vital records. When a voucher school closes, student records are at the mercy of administrators who may or may not feel an obligation to secure them for future use.**

**In fact, those schools are not even required to gather or maintain that information at all.**

**Not having access to school records not only limits the potential of students after high school, it puts transferring students at a disadvantage because they don't have record of courses taken or grades earned. I have met with administrators in Milwaukee who are receiving transfer students from voucher schools and are completely frustrated by this.**



# SONDY POPE-ROBERTS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Without appropriate transfer information they find it most difficult to place a transferring student into the appropriate school setting. They then become dependent upon the student to accurately and honestly self-report their educational history from the previous school experience.

This bill, the School Transcripts Protection Act, was drafted with the intent of protecting the records of the Milwaukee Parental Choice students. It is also intended to ensure that Wisconsin tax dollars, provided through the voucher program, are being used responsibly. As stewards of the taxpayer's dollars, it is our duty to attempt to know as much as we can about the successful outcomes that we hope to achieve.

The School Transcripts Protection Act will protect students in a variety of ways.

- Voucher schools would need to provide all students with proof of graduation from high school.
- Voucher schools would be required to keep transcripts for all students (courses taken, grades and attendance) while the student is attending the school and for at least 5 years thereafter and would be required to make them available, upon request, to a pupil or a pupils' parent if the pupil is a minor.
- Voucher schools would be required to transfer pupils' records to another school or school district if the pupil transfers.
- If a voucher school closes, the school would be required to transfer all transcripts to Milwaukee Public Schools.

Requiring schools to keep record of this important information is a simple way to prevent devastating problems from occurring for Milwaukee Parental Choice students. Not having access to these vital records is undoubtedly detrimental to students' educational endeavors and we must act now to prevent this from continuing to occur.

Please support the School Transcripts Protection Act and guarantee that no students will face the daunting difficulties that we have allowed to occur in the past.

**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI)**

August 31, 2006

**After schools close, students seek records Educators tell of lost transcripts***SARAH CARR Staff Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

When Fallon Perry graduated from high school in Milwaukee in the spring of 2005, she hoped to start college as soon as possible.

The graduation ceremony from Learning Enterprise High School had been rough — a makeshift affair thrown together at the last minute before the school closed, in her view. It made Perry, now 19, feel anything but special. But then things got worse.

For months, she could not get anyone to send her a high school transcript, or proof that she had graduated from Learning Enterprise. She gave up on her dream of applying to Alverno College. She almost gave up on college altogether.

Milwaukee Area Technical College "told me I had to take a **GED** class, but I knew I had already graduated. That just made me want to give up on college. Period," Perry said.

Stories like Perry's have become more common across the city as high schools — both public and private — close in record numbers. The state's Department of Public Instruction has taken a harder line on schools in the choice program, moving to remove some schools in the middle of the year. And Milwaukee Public Schools has closed a cluster of charter schools over the last year.

While most educators agree that the school closings are a good idea, since many of the programs were struggling or of low quality, the trend puts students such as Perry in a new kind of bind.

Not only might they have fallen behind academically, but any record of the courses they took, grades they completed or diplomas they earned may have vanished into thin air.

"Schools come and go, and students are at the mercy of the record systems of these separate schools," said Robert Bullock, who works in the student services division at MATC. "It does seem to have become a problem."

Over the past few years, voucher schools such as Learning Enterprise or Academic Solutions have closed their doors, either voluntarily or unwillingly. Academic Solutions, a school with a large high school program, was kicked out of the voucher program in the winter of 2005; at one time it listed hundreds of students on its roster.

Milwaukee Public Schools has also moved to close a few of its charter high schools (charter schools are publicly funded, but have more flexibility with some rules) over the past school year. One, the New Hope Institute of Science & Technology, closed its doors to students almost immediately after the School Board voted to close it, although others stayed open through the end of the school year.

In the case of some of the voucher schools that closed, "We have a lot of high school-age children calling and wanting to know where their records are," says Bob Soldner, an official at the DPI. Schools are required to keep records that can be used to verify enrollment numbers for at least three years, Soldner said. But they are not necessarily required to keep student transcripts.

He said some schools, including Academic Solutions and L.E.A.D.E.R Institute, appear to have destroyed all of their student records, making it more challenging for students to enroll in college or new high schools.

Henry Tyler, head of L.E.A.D.E.R., which was kicked out of the choice program last winter, e-mailed the DPI to say he'd "destroyed the records and doesn't have them," said Soldner. In an e-mail, Tyler told the Journal Sentinel that "since the closure of the school I have moved away to try and restart my life and put the sour taste of what happened to L.E.A.D.E.R. behind me."

Tyler said he e-mailed officials at the DPI about what to do with student transcripts, but "the DPI gave me no direction as to where to send the records." He then sent the transcripts to MPS and destroyed other records. But he said he still gets calls from parents confused about where to get records.

"I thought, 'My God, all the schools that closed over the years, what happened to those records as well?'"

When Perry tried to obtain a transcript from Learning Enterprise, once a multi-branch operation with both a **choice school** and a charter school, she was eventually told the school's computer system had crashed and that student records were temporarily unavailable. Although Perry says she did fine on a placement test at MATC, since she didn't have any records and didn't think she could enroll, she instead tried to find a job last year.

"Them playing with my transcript messed up a lot of things, like health insurance," Perry said. "I didn't get it because I wasn't in school."

Bernard Patterson, a spokesman for Learning Enterprise, said he's trying to "solve the difficulties of being able to pull up transcripts. The computer system is down, but it's all being worked out."

Even when students do arrive at MPS with transcripts in hand, they may not include "recognizable courses," said Caroline Williams, the head of the guidance department for the district. "One of the trends right now is toward using very creative course titles," she said. "They may not be consistent with what we know we have to have, like algebra or geometry."

Partly for this reason, MPS is asking its schools (particularly charters) that do not use a standard transcript to create a "translation" of their own transcripts, said Hughes George, the director of student services, although the school district has no authority over private schools in the voucher program. "We have had problems enrolling a number of students from schools (that) have closed," George said.

Williams said part of the responsibility rests with the parents. "It's time that parents really start to take some ownership in trying to investigate where their children are going" to school, she said.

In Perry's case, she eventually received a transcript from Learning Enterprise several months after she began her search. By that time, she says, it was too late to enroll in MATC for the 2005-'06 school year. And when the time came to enroll for this fall, MATC had lost the hard copy of the transcript she had finally wrested from Learning Enterprise, she says.

In the end, MATC accepted Perry's diploma (with her name spelled wrong) and a letter from Learning Enterprise officials as proof that she had graduated, and Perry started classes at MATC over the last few days.

This is something MATC finds itself doing more and more, Bullock said. "Most of the time, the student still has a high school diploma and we have honored that because there is no other record that exists."

Perry, who wants to study nursing, says she's "glad to move on." But sometimes when she thinks of the botched graduation ceremony and the elusive transcript, she feels "like a bride would feel if their wedding day was all messed up."

TIPS FOR PARENTS, STUDENTS

- Hold on to student report cards or progress reports whenever possible.
- If you know that your child's school is scheduled to close at the end of the semester or school year, try to get transcripts and other records before the school closes, not after.
- Check into all aspects of a school before deciding to enroll your child, including the record-keeping and the school's success at helping students enroll in other high schools or college.

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**Peter Blewett, Ph.D.**  
 President, Board of School Directors  
 District 6  
 2750 North 45<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Milwaukee, WI 53210  
 (414) 442-6866  
 blewett@milwaukee.k12.wi.us

RECEIVED  
 MAR 04 2007  
 BY:

February 29, 2008

The Honorable John W. Lehman  
 Wisconsin State Senate, District 21  
 Room 310 S  
 P.O. Box 7882  
 Madison, WI 53707-7882

*Bill file*

Dear Senator Lehman:

I am writing to thank you, on behalf of the children of Milwaukee, for being a sponsor of Wisconsin State Senate Bill 349 to require private schools that participate in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) to maintain progress records for each of their pupils under the MPCP.

It is my strong belief that Choice schools do have a moral — and should have a legal — responsibility to meet the same standards of accountability as do the public schools when it comes to educating children at the public expense. The State has an obligation to its citizens — parents, children, and taxpayers alike — to ensure that the money it spends on education is being used honestly, wisely, and effectively to provide our children with the skills and knowledge that they will need to compete in the global economy and to be strong, active, and well-informed citizens of this country and the world. SB 349 is one step toward fulfilling that obligation.

It is my understanding that the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) has registered its opposition to Wisconsin Senate Bill 349. I am enclosing for your information with this letter a copy of a letter which I have written to the MMAC, inquiring as to the grounds of its opposition.

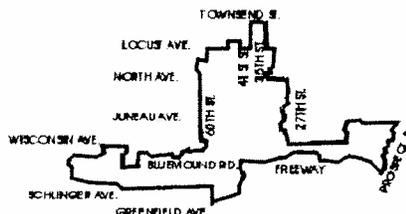
Again, please accept my deepest gratitude for the hard work that you are doing to ensure brighter futures for our children.

Sincerely,

Peter Blewett, PhD

*Thanks!*  
*P*

Enclosure





MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PETER BLEWETT

President  
Milwaukee Board of School Directors  
2750 M 45<sup>th</sup> Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53210  
(414) 442-2807  
governance@milwaukee.k12.wi.us

February 23, 2008

Tim Sheehy  
Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce  
756 North Milwaukee Street  
Suite 400  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

Dear Mr. Sheehy,

It is my understanding that that the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce has registered its opposition to Senate Bill 349. I am writing to inquire respectfully about the nature of your organization's opposition to this bill.

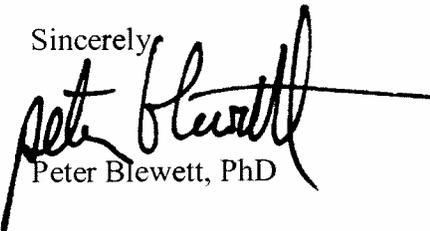
As the lead educational agency for all students in the city, except for those students enrolled in schools chartered by another public entity, Milwaukee Public Schools is legally bound to ensure that students and parents have access to their student records. MPS takes this duty very seriously because of the importance of these records in helping students obtain educational services. These records also assist students in their pursuit of educational and / or career opportunities.

SB 349 appears to be a straightforward piece of legislation that seeks to protect the rights of students in several ways and that ensures that Milwaukee Parental Choice Program schools maintain student records for students enrolled in those schools. The bill would also ensure that students and their parents are guaranteed access to their records upon request, and the bill would provide that, if an MPCP school were to close, the student records maintained by those schools would be transferred to MPS for safekeeping. The bill would provide an additional protection for students by requiring MPCP schools to issue certificates or diplomas to students who have satisfied the requirements necessary for high school graduation.

Given the common sense approach that this bill appears to take toward protecting the rights of Milwaukee Parental Choice Program students and their families, I am puzzled by your organization's opposition to it. Any information that you would be willing to provide to clarify MMAC's position in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Peter Blewett, PhD



# School Choice

2025 North Summit Avenue, Suite 103, Milwaukee, WI 53202 • Phone 414 319-9160 • Fax 414 765-0220

Monday, March 3, 2008

Sen. John Lehman  
Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
310 South, State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707

Sen. Lehman,

I write today to oppose Senate Bill 349, relating to records of pupils attending a private school participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this bill.

School Choice Wisconsin (SCW) agrees that private schools participating in the MPCP should maintain student records but we oppose Senate Bill 349 because it is unnecessary and threatens the legality of the MPCP.

State law already has measures in place to safeguard progress records for each pupil. Under 2005 Act 125, schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) must be accredited within three years by an approved agency. Under current law, the following agencies are approved:

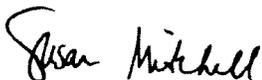
- Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation (WRISA)
- Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS)
- Wisconsin North Central Association (WNCA)
- The Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University (ITL)
- The Archdiocese of Milwaukee
- Any school accredited by a member of the National Council for Private Schools Accreditation (NCPSA)

Each of these accreditation agencies has specific standards and requirements for student record keeping. If a school participating in the MPCP fails to keep accurate student records that school would be out of compliance with the accreditation requirement. The accreditation agency involved would report such a school to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Under Wisconsin statute 119.23, the state superintendent “may issue an order barring the private school from participating in the program” if the “private school’s application for accreditation has been denied by the accrediting organization.”

In addition, SCW believes that any effort to apply public school record keeping could potentially threaten excessive entanglement, which was specifically prohibited in the 1998 Wisconsin Supreme Court decision, *Jackson v. Benson*. If the accreditation process, already passed into law with 2005 Act 125, requires private schools to maintain student progress records, there is no need to further increase the State’s regulation of participating private schools which might “approach the level of constitutionally impermissible involvement.”

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Susan Mitchell  
President





MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**PETER BLEWETT**

President

Milwaukee Board of School Directors

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 3, 2008**

As the lead educational agency for all students in the City of Milwaukee — except for those students enrolled in schools chartered by another public entity — Milwaukee Public Schools is legally bound to ensure that students and parents have access to their student records. These records include the courses which a student has taken, the student's grades, the student's attendance record, the student's immunization record, and records of the student's extracurricular activities. Because of the importance of these records in documenting educational progress, in obtaining educational services, and in assisting students in their pursuit of post-secondary education and careers, MPS takes its duty very seriously.

On December 7, 2007, State Senators Lena Taylor, John Lehman, Mark Miller, and Jon Erpenbach introduced Wisconsin Senate Bill 349, which would hold a private school that participates in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) to some of the same legal standards under which MPS must operate by requiring the private school to:

- maintain progress records for each pupil attending the school under the MPCP while the pupil attends the school and for at least five years thereafter;
- provide a copy of the records to the pupil or the pupil's parent or guardian upon request and, if the school closes, to transfer the records to the Milwaukee Public Schools; and
- issue a high-school diploma or certificate to each pupil attending the school under the MPCP who satisfies all of the requirements necessary for high-school graduation.

The bill was co-sponsored by Representatives Pope-Roberts, Richards, Sherman, Black, Grigsby, Van Akkeren, Sheridan, Pocan, Berceau, Townsend, Gottlieb, Cullen, Hixson, Jorgensen, Schneider, Toles, Fields, A. Ott, Krusick, Sinicki, Mason, and Soletski.

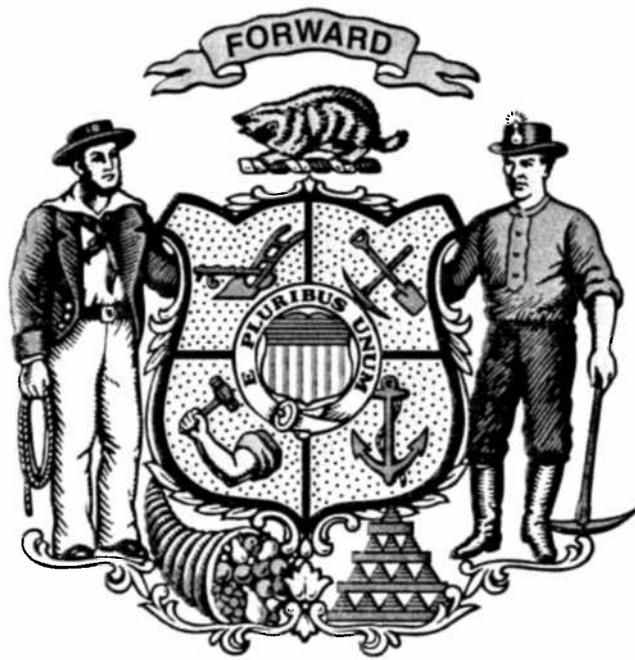
It is my understanding that that the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) has registered its opposition to Senate Bill 349. Given the common-sense approach that this bill appears to take toward protecting the rights of Milwaukee Parental Choice Program students and their families, I am perplexed by MMAC's opposition to it. SB 349 appears to be a straightforward

piece of legislation that seeks to protect the rights of students in several ways and that ensures that Milwaukee Parental Choice Program schools maintain student records for students enrolled in those schools. I have written a letter to Timothy R. Sheehy, President of MMAC, inquiring as to the nature of his organization's opposition to this bill.

It is my strong belief that Choice schools do have a moral — and should have a legal — responsibility to meet the same standards of accountability as do the public schools when it comes to educating children at the public expense. The State, in turn, has an obligation to its citizens — parents, children, and taxpayers alike — to ensure that the money it spends on education is being used honestly, wisely, and effectively to provide our children with the skills and knowledge that they will need to compete in the global economy and to be strong, active, and well-informed citizens of this country and the world. SB 349 is one step toward fulfilling that obligation.

I enthusiastically applaud Senators Taylor, Lehman, Miller, and Erpenbach, and their colleagues in the Assembly who co-sponsored their bill, for their attempts to bring equity, responsibility, and accountability to the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. I offer them my wholehearted gratitude for their concern for all the children of Milwaukee.

— 30 —



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# WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

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Affiliated with the National Education Association

*Every kid  
deserves a  
Great School!*

## MEMO

TO: Members of the State Senate

RE: SB 349, requiring certain records for pupils attending a private school participating in the Milwaukee private school voucher program

SB 486, requiring licensure of instructional staff participating in the Milwaukee private school voucher program

DA: March 12, 2008

FR: Michael Walsh, WEAC Government Relations Specialist

WEAC supports any legislation to hold schools in the Milwaukee private school voucher program to the same standards as public schools. Every kid deserves a great school, and SB 349 and SB 486 provide minimal common-sense levels of accountability for Milwaukee voucher schools—that student records be maintained and teachers be licensed.

SB 349 requires Milwaukee voucher schools to maintain progress records for attending students and for at least five years after a student leaves the school. The bill requires the voucher schools to provide records to parents and, if the school closes, to transfer the records to the Milwaukee Public Schools. The bill also requires the voucher schools to issue a high school diploma or certificate upon graduation and the voucher schools to send records to other schools when requested. Currently public schools are held to this minimal standard.

SB 486 requires that, beginning in the 2009-10 school year, all instructional staff in Milwaukee voucher schools hold a license or a permit to teach issued by DPI. The bill defines "instructional staff" to include all professional employees who have direct contact with students or with the instructional program of the voucher school. Currently public schools are held to this minimal standard while voucher school teachers are only required to have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

After nearly half a billion taxpayer dollars used to fund the voucher schools while siphoning money away from Milwaukee Public Schools, there is not a single piece of legitimate research saying that the program has improved student achievement. With so much state and local property taxpayer money going to fund the voucher schools, why not at least require a licensed teacher in the classroom and that student records be maintained? Academic and clerical accountability is needed to ensure that children are protected and receiving at least a sound basic education.

WEAC urges you to pass both SB 349 and SB 486.

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