



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AMENDMENT MEMO

2011 Senate Bill 234

**Senate
Amendments 1 and 2**

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Current law permits private schools that meet certain conditions to participate in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. In addition, under 2011 Wisconsin Act 32, the Biennial Budget Act, private schools may participate in a parental choice program in an eligible school district.

Senate Bill 234 makes various changes to both parental choice programs. The changes to which Senate Amendments 1 and 2 relate are described below.

Senate Amendment 1--Preaccreditation of Private Schools

Current law provides that, for a private school that is a first-time participant in a parental choice program and that is not accredited by the Wisconsin North Central Association, the Wisconsin Religious and Independent School Accreditation, the Independent Schools Association of the Central States, the archdiocese within which the private school is located, or by any other organization recognized by the National Council for Private Schools Accreditation, the private school must obtain preaccreditation by the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University or by any of the above entities by the date specified in the statutes.

The bill adds to the list of entities from which a private school may obtain accreditation or preaccreditation the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation, the National Lutheran School Accreditation, and the diocese within which the private school is located. However, the bill also provides that a private school may only obtain preaccreditation from an organization listed in the statute, not from any other organization recognized by the National Council for Private School Accreditation.

Senate Amendment 1 provides that, in any school year, a private school may apply for and seek to obtain preaccreditation from only one of the above entities. A private school that fails to obtain preaccreditation in a school year may apply for and seek to obtain accreditation from one of the above entities in the following school year.

Senate Amendment 2--Determination of Family Income

Under both parental choice programs, a family must meet income eligibility criteria in order for a pupil to attend a private school under the program. Current law requires the Department of Revenue (DOR) to review a family's income information and determine whether the pupil is eligible to participate in the program.

The bill requires DOR to verify the eligibility or ineligibility of a pupil to participate. If DOR is unable to verify the family's income or ascertain whether the pupil is eligible or ineligible to participate, DOR must notify the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), which must determine whether the pupil is eligible to participate using an alternative process.

Senate Amendment 2 provides that, if DOR is unable to verify (instead of ascertain) eligibility, it must notify DPI. The amendment also requires information relating to family income to be initially submitted to DPI instead of DOR.

Legislative History

Senator Vukmir offered Senate Amendments 1 and 2. On October 19, 2011, the Senate Committee on Education unanimously recommended adoption of Senate Amendments 1 and 2 and recommended passage of the bill, as amended, on a vote of Ayes, 6; Noes, 1.

AS:wu