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February 16, 2022

Testimony for AB 970 – School Choice Caps

Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

Thank you for taking time to hold a hearing on Assembly Bill 970. This piece of legislation would eliminate the enrollment and income caps on the Parental Choice Programs in Wisconsin.

Last week Representative Snodgrass tweeted that if parents want to have a say in their child's education, they should pay for private school or home school. Evidently, this means public schools exist to dictate to parents what will happen with their children without question. This declaration unfortunately represents the mindset of far too many people both inside and outside the education establishment.

School Choice Wisconsin Action, just like the US Supreme Court, believes parents are the primary educators of their children.

These divergent beliefs highlight two distinct perspectives – is public education as an extension of government or is public education as an extension of parenting?

We support AB 970 due to its empowerment of all parents. The private school choice programs have shown higher academic performance and overwhelming popularity with parents in Milwaukee for three decades and statewide for nearly a decade.

On the change to the enrollment caps: –while the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP) was created in 2013, the caps were put in place in 2015. These caps limited eligibility to only 1% of a public school district enrollment during the first year. That cap increases by 1% a year and today sits at 6%. Once it reaches 10%, the caps will disappear the following year. AB 970 simply moves up that timeline.

There is good reason to do so. While enrollment in the WPCP has shown steady growth over the years, the number of districts hitting the enrollment cap is limited. However, the cap requires DPI to administer a lengthy lottery process to distributing seats to all private schools in the Wisconsin program. This means that schools do not find out how many students will be attending their school until the summer.

By contrast, in Milwaukee, where no enrollment caps exist, the schools run their own lotteries monthly starting in February. Eliminating the enrollment cap will lead to more predictability in the enrollment process.

On the income limits: SCW believes that all families should be able to choose.

Consider a very interesting case before the US Supreme Court last fall that focused on an education program in Maine. Under certain circumstances, Maine provides a voucher to families for private schools. In 1980, after nearly a century of including religious schools, Maine opted to exclude them. The case is focused on the constitutionality of doing so.

During the oral arguments, the attorney for Maine kept referring to the voucher as a benefit. A justice pointed out that Maine mandates that families enroll their children in school. The Maine attorney agreed. The justice said that he failed to see how Maine could view the voucher as a benefit when Maine required the families to both attend school and pay taxes for education. If families must enroll their children in school and pay taxes to support schools, must you not treat all families equally? On what basis do you deprive them of options that meet the mandatory attendance requirement?

That same imbalance is found in Wisconsin. We should treat all families equally.

This bill simply gives all parents the same eligibility to attend private schools that public schools currently enjoy. All parents would have the ability to direct education funding allocated by the state to any option that meets the mandatory education requirement.

To truly spark innovation and creative solutions in education, we need to move away from the hope that large bureaucracies will suddenly change their operational focus. They will not. Rather, we should empower all parents by allowing them to direct education funding and unleash the creative forces currently held at bay.

There are educational innovators across all sectors of education. The bureaucrats have been in charge for decades and our academic performance is falling short. Let's truly give all parents control watch the innovation flourish.

Jim Bender  
Government Affairs Consultant  
School Choice Wisconsin Action





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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 970**  
**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**  
**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2022**  
**JULAIN K. APPLING, PRESIDENT**

Thank you, Chairman Thiesfeldt and committee members, for the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 970. I am Julaine Appling, president of Wisconsin Family Action. Wisconsin Family Action supports this bill. Thank you to the authors and co-sponsors who have put this bill forward.

Wisconsin Family Council, our sister education organization, was started in May 1986, and was begun as a direct result of a major legislative issue in 1983. In 1983, the state legislature was considering legislation that had two primary purposes: 1) to define what a private school is in Wisconsin, and 2) to establish officially what today we call home-schooling. Our statutes refer to this school choice option as a “private home-based educational program.” Founders of our organization worked hard, along with other concerned citizens and private-school leaders to get these educational options codified. I’m thankful everyday for their work and their success.

I relate this story because Wisconsin Family Action and Wisconsin Family Council have always been about educational options. In 1990, when then-State Representative Polly Annette Williams, a Democrat from Milwaukee, authored and successfully passed the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, we were there, supported the measure, and were thrilled when it became a reality—and established the first-in-the-country voucher program that has allowed some parents to get their children out of low-performing public schools and into private schools where they could flourish. We watched in those early years as the program took form, prevailed in some key lawsuits, and began to really flourish in our state’s largest city. We had some issues that needed to be addressed and resolved, and by and large they were. Some private schools were started for the wrong reason ended up not

We championed and cheered when under Governor Scott Walker the Republican-led state legislature expanded the Parental Choice Program to Racine and then to the entire state as the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program.

Over the years with the formation of School Choice Wisconsin and Wisconsin Institute of Law and Liberty, we have had deep-dive research done that shows that students enrolled in one of our PCP on average do very well, often out-performing their peers in public schools.

In WILL’s most recent *Apples to Apples Study* (issued January 2021, covering 2019 test scores), Milwaukee’s Parental Choice Program Proficiency rates in math exceeded rates in Milwaukee Public Schools by 3.9% and 4.6% in English Language Arts on average.<sup>1</sup> The same study revealed that “Proficiency exceeds traditional public schools 3.05% in the [Wisconsin Parental Choice Program] and [Racine Parental Choice Program] schools.”<sup>2</sup>

This same study reminds us that “[t]he School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) was founded by the state in 2006 to conduct extensive research on the effectiveness of the [Milwaukee Parental Choice Program] using a wide variety of metrics. Scholars in the SCDP applied state-of-the-art matching methods to compare students in the MPCP with students in MPS who were similar in neighborhood, race, and prior achievement. Such studies represent the best analytic techniques, short of true experiments, where students are randomly assigned to a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://will-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/applestoapplesstudyiii-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://will-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/applestoapplesstudyiii-1.pdf>



choice school or not via a lottery. Among the findings from this matching analysis are that students in the MPCP were 4-7 percentage points more likely to graduate from high school (Cowen et. al. 2013). Moreover, students in the MPCP were found to achieve higher scores in reading, though similar scores in math (Witte et. al. 2012). Other findings, not related to academic achievement, include lower incidences of criminal behavior (DeAngelis and Wolf 2016) and extensive economic benefits (Flanders and DeAngelis 2017).”<sup>3</sup>

These programs save taxpayers money and in general provide a better return on their tax investment. I’ve seen reports varying from \$13,000 per student statewide average to over \$16,000 per student statewide average. The maximum voucher is \$8982 for non-special needs students, with students with special needs getting vouchers of just over \$13,000. Let’s just assume \$14,500 is the average per-pupil cost for public schools in Wisconsin. That means if every student in the voucher program got the highest voucher payment, which never would happen, taxpayers would save about \$5,500 per voucher student. The actual savings is obviously higher.

Right now, as we know, our Choice Programs are limited to individuals with certain incomes, in some cases to certain zip codes, and also by enrollment caps. It’s time to lift all of those, and Assembly Bill 970 does all that. It’s time to give all parents, regardless of income or zip code or number of people in their school district, an opportunity to choose the best school for their child.

Expanding the Choice Program stands to reap some very positive results economically for the entire state. According to a report released by WILL in 2020, Will Flanders, PhD, takes evidence from a study that documents that Milwaukee Parental Choice Program students are more likely to graduate from college and extrapolates what the economic gains could mean to the state if the programs are expanded. Dr. Flanders posits that Madison could see \$100 million in economic benefits, \$75 million for Green Bay, \$60 million for Appleton and \$24 million for La Crosse.<sup>4</sup> Education isn’t just about today; it’s about tomorrow—and expanding the Choice Programs means good things for Wisconsin’s future.

Our state’s Parental Choice Programs have been tried and tested now over many years. Studies continue to show students in these programs are, on average, certainly performing no worse than their public-school counterparts and in many cases, are performing not just better, but significantly better. It’s time to give this opportunity to all parents across our state.

Wisconsin Family Action believes parents are responsible for the education of their children. The more educational options parents have, the better as they seek what is best for their children. We urge the committee to support AB 970 and move it to the full Assembly expeditiously.

Thank you for your time today and for your careful consideration of our position on this bill.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://will-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/applestoapplesstudyiii-1.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://will-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/will-ripple-effect-v3.pdf>



# Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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*P.O. Box 7222, Madison, Wisconsin 53707*

## Survival Coalition Statement in opposition to (or regarding) AB970 & AB966

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations, a cross-disability coalition of more than 20 state and local organizations and groups, has significant concerns about two of the bills that are before the Assembly Committee on Education on Wednesday February 16. AB970 would remove existing income limits and participation limits on Wisconsin's voucher programs; AB966 would partition the Milwaukee Public School District into four to eight smaller districts. Both of these bills would be disproportionately harmful for students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities have federal rights to a free, appropriate public education, but those rights only apply in public schools. AB970, which proposes an immense expansion of the voucher programs, would funnel scarce funding resources away from the public schools where those rights apply, and into private schools that are not bound by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). We know from past decades of experience in Milwaukee that the unbridled expansion of vouchers tends to concentrate the students with the greatest disability-related challenges into public schools, while simultaneously cutting into the funding that supports them. Public schools remain the only schools in Wisconsin that are required to enroll and educate students of all abilities. To support students with disabilities to get the necessary education to lead a full and participatory life in communities across our state, Wisconsin should be supporting public schools rather than expanding voucher programs. AB970 does the opposite.

AB966, with its proposal to split the Milwaukee public schools into multiple districts, would add an additional layer of disproportional impact for students with disabilities, given that 19.6% of MPS students have disabilities while the statewide percentage is only 14.2%. The bill leaves undefined what would happen to a student who attends an MPS school outside their new home-district lines after the districts are drawn, but none of the possibilities are good: either undergoing the disruption of being forced to change schools, or the uncertainty and bureaucracy of being suddenly open-enrolled across district lines. In addition, the forcible split would reduce the placement opportunities that are currently available for students with disabilities across the entire city. The new subdivided districts would either incur additional expense in recreating those opportunities or succumb to financial pressure and fail to offer them at all. A proposal this sweeping should involve a robust stakeholder process, and the lack of that input leaves this bill replete with unintended consequences, particularly for students with disabilities.

The Survival Coalition opposes both AB970 & AB966.

Sincerely,

Survival Co-Chairs:

Beth Swedeen, (608) 220-2924; [beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov](mailto:beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov)

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Real Lives, Real Work, Real Smart, Wisconsin  
Investing in People with Disabilities



TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Education

FROM: Rachel Ver Velde, Director of Workforce, Education and Employment Policy

DATE: February 16, 2022

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 970, Statewide Parental Choice Program

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Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 970. I want to thank Representative Wittke and Senator Roth for authoring this important legislation to expand school choice to all families in Wisconsin.

WMC is the largest general business association in Wisconsin, representing approximately 3,800 member companies of all sizes, and from every sector of the economy. Since 1911, our mission has been to make Wisconsin the most competitive state in the nation to do business. That mission includes making sure Wisconsin's youth are prepared and ready to participate in the workforce.

In 1990, Wisconsin led the nation by creating the parental school choice program in Milwaukee to bring education options to low-income students stuck in failing public schools. Since then, the school choice program has been expanded statewide so that students throughout the state have the ability to get a great education. Unfortunately, the statewide program has both income limits and pupil caps that restrict the number of students that can access this educational option.

Assembly Bill 970 removes the statewide pupil participation limits, eliminates the family income limits and creates an education expense reimbursement program (micro-ESA) for public school students. This bill helps us take a giant step forward in reforming our K-12 education system.

Wisconsin has increased spending on K-12 education for the last five state budgets. Unfortunately, even as spending has climbed in recent years, educational outcomes have not improved. And, we have seen this problem made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2016-17 school year, 44.4% of students were proficient in English Language Arts. That number has dropped in subsequent years and hit a low of 33.7% in 2020-21. In math, 42.8% of students were proficient in the 2016-17 school year. The number went up and down slightly the next two years, but then dropped significantly to 33.6% in 2020-21.

These poor outcomes are a huge concern for Wisconsin employers. It is vitally important for employers to have students graduating from the K-12 system that are proficient in reading, writing and math. In WMC's most recent *Wisconsin Employer Survey* that was conducted in January 2022, 88% of employers indicated that they are struggling to hire workers. As employers throughout

Wisconsin have severe worker shortages it becomes even more important that their future employees have basic competencies and skills for the workplace.

That is why our employers are supportive of statewide school choice for all students, as is done in this bill. They want to be sure that students have access to the best schools and the ability to partake in educational options that are the best fit for the student. The micro-ESA program created in this bill will further allow public school students and their access to wider selection of courses and materials that otherwise would be unavailable to them. The way to improve all of Wisconsin's schools is to create greater competition in the education market. As more students have additional opportunities, this will hopefully drive failing schools and the education establishment to improve outcomes across the board.

WMC urges members of the Assembly Committee on Education to support Assembly Bill 940 in order to ensure that all students have access to a great education.





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February 16, 2022

Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of on Assembly Bill 970, a proposal by Representative Wittke and Senator Roth regarding the expansion of the parental choice programs and creation of education expense reimbursement program.

**1) Expands the parental choice programs by removing barriers for access.**

Assembly Bill 970 removes several barriers from the existing parental choice programs to make it easier for families to access the parental choice programs and for private schools to provide more high-quality options for students.

Under the current law, the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP) has several barriers that make it harder for both families and schools to participate. For instance, many schools in Milwaukee and Racine participate in several programs. But students participating in the WPCP must have an income 220% of the federal poverty line while the Milwaukee and Racine programs have an income limit of 300%. This means that families may be denied access to the voucher based on their home address.

Furthermore, enrollment in the choice programs continues to grow. In 2021-22, the WPCP grew by 2,425 number of students. But the WPCP pupil participation limits impacts families in six districts.<sup>1</sup> For example, West Allis-West Milwaukee was rated as “meets few expectations” on the 2020-2021 report cards. Families located in this district are on a waiting list to participate in the choice program due to the pupil participation limits.

Despite these limitations, the WPCP continues to provide families with access to educational options. For example, the Green Bay Area Catholic Education (GRACE) system has more than 2,300 students at its nine schools. About 27% of the student population uses the WPCP to attend one of the nine schools. AB 970 could help more families in the Green Bay area access a high-quality school in the GRACE network if the barriers like income limitation and grade point entry requirements are removed.

Other private schools are also prevented from expanding by the current regulations. For example, LUMIN has a network of seven schools across Milwaukee and Racine. LUMIN wanted to expand to other parts of the state where there are not high-quality options for students. In 2019, LUMIN opened a private school in Beloit. In preparation of the opening, LUMIN staff reached out to the community and interested families to let them know about the newest option in the community. But the WPCP limitations made it harder for families to attend. Unfortunately, a combination of limited participation by families and the COVID-19 pandemic led to the school to close.

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<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin & Racine Parental Choice Program 2021-22, [https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/parental-education-options/Choice/Data and Reports/2021-22/21-22\\_WPCP\\_6\\_Limits.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/parental-education-options/Choice/Data%20and%20Reports/2021-22/21-22_WPCP_6_Limits.pdf)

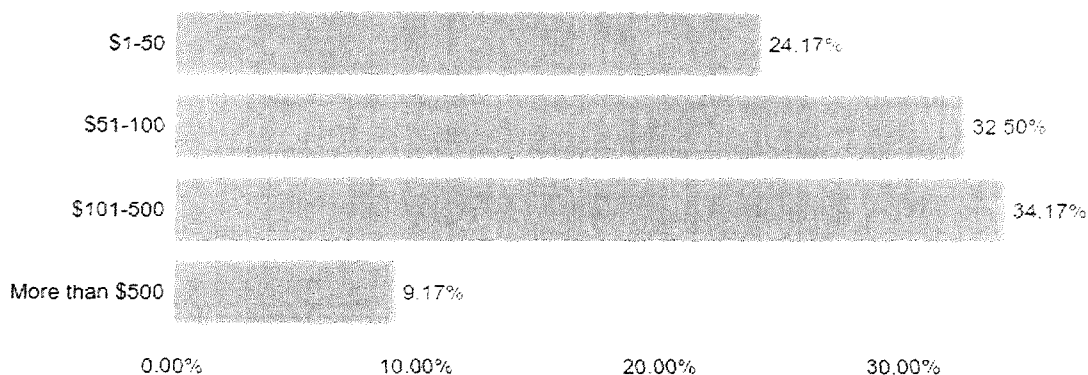


AB 970 is addressing barriers that prevent families from accessing high-quality educational options. This bill will help private schools like LUMIN and GRACE to expand and provide more access for families across the state.

**2) Provides public school families will access to funds for educational expenses.**

When the pandemic hit Wisconsin in March 2020, parents were scrambling to purchase educational materials for their children so they could learn from home. As the pandemic and rolling school closures have continued over the past two years, parents continue to bear the burden of creating an educational environment at home for their children.

In April 2020, WILL surveyed Wisconsin parents on their experiences with children learning from home during the early pandemic.<sup>2</sup> Our survey results found that parents were spending money on educational materials for their children.



30% of the 400 respondents reported spending money on educational materials and the highest rates were among low-income respondents. It is a reasonable assumption that as the pandemic and school closures continued into the 2020-21 school year that parent’s investment into educational materials increased. Indeed, a nationwide analysis in 2021 found an increase of nearly \$232 billion—or 10%--on educational spending during the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

AB 970 provides public-school parents with critical access to funding that will help cover such costs, including textbooks and curriculum. The bill allows the Department of Public Instruction to approve other educational expenses as well.

AB 970 also allows public school families to use the education expense reimbursement program to attend up to two courses at participating schools, including private and tribal K-12 schools,

<sup>2</sup> <https://will-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/survey20presentation20final.pptx.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> EdWeek, “Parents’ Spending on Education Boomed During the Pandemic. Here’s Why.” May 14, 2021, <https://marketbrief.edweek.org/marketplace-k-12/parents-spending-education-boomed-pandemic-heres/>



institutions of higher education and approved educational operators. This will give public school students access to more course options without having to leave their current school.

The impact of the pandemic on student learning loss is still being determined. As parents and teachers work to address to close these gaps, access to additional educational options may help students do just that. For example, a student struggling with reading proficiency may use the resources in AB 970 to access additional curricular materials to supplemental their classroom work. This bills flexibility gives parents and students the option to customize their educational options to help their child succeed.

AB 970 is a bill that will help students across the Badger state access a high-quality education and more educational options.

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

Thank you,

Libby Sobic  
Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty  
[libby@will-law.org](mailto:libby@will-law.org)



**MEMO**

**TO:** Assembly Committee on Education

**FROM:** Chris Reader, Executive Vice President of IRG Action Fund

**DATE:** February 16, 2022

**RE:** Support for AB 970, School Choice Expansion

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Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the committee,

Thank you for holding this hearing today on these important education reform proposals. My name is Chris Reader, and I'm the Executive Vice President for IRG Action Fund. IRG Action Fund is the advocacy and lobbying partner to the Institute for Reforming Government, a Wisconsin based think tank.

It's time for Wisconsin to reclaim its status as a national leader in education reform and empowering parents with giving them more control over their children's education. Our K-12 education system - and therefore our economy - is held back by a K-12 system that does not help prepare our children for the workforce.

- > Roughly two out of every three fourth graders in Wisconsin are not proficient in reading.<sup>1</sup>
- > Wisconsin ranks last in the country for reading proficiency for black students.
- > Before the pandemic - which has only exacerbated the problem, 11% of African American students in Green Bay were proficient in English and 9.5% of African American students in Madison were proficient in English.
- > Since 1992, Wisconsin is one of only six states to see a significant drop in reading test scores.

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[https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/WI?cti=PgTab\\_OT&hort=1&sub=MAT&sj=WI&f s=Grade&st=MN&year=2017R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=-2017R3 &sfj=NP](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/WI?cti=PgTab_OT&hort=1&sub=MAT&sj=WI&f s=Grade&st=MN&year=2017R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=-2017R3 &sfj=NP)



> One out of five incoming freshmen in the University of Wisconsin system have to retake high school math.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, Wisconsin has long been a leader in offering public and private school options to parents. Our storied history of parental choice started with bipartisan support, and we hope the bill before you now will also enjoy bipartisan backing. After all, it is the children of Wisconsin that AB 970 aims to help, and that should come before any party bosses or union directives. Thank you especially to Rep. Wittke for authoring this bold reform.

The current school choice program, even with limitations on income eligibility and enrollment caps, is a proven success. According to a review of studies by the Wisconsin Federation for Children<sup>3</sup>, the parental choice programs in Wisconsin are proven to result in:

1. higher academic achievement,
2. improved mental health of students,
3. higher likelihood of college admission,
4. reduced crime and safer schools.

Unfortunately, in recent years, progress has stalled, and too many children lack access to a good school. The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused a precipitous drop in test scores and has demonstrated the need to give all parents, no matter their income, background, or zip code, a set of good educational choices for their kids.

**AB 970 will reclaim Wisconsin's national leadership role in providing options to children and their parents.** It removes state enrollment caps, family income limits, and grade entry points on the existing Milwaukee, Racine, and statewide parental choice programs. Bold reforms for sure, but absolutely necessary if your goal is to help children succeed.

It also creates individual scholarships for children in public schools to take courses from an approved provider. Funds can also be used to pay for educational materials and resources offered by a wide variety of education providers.

**If passed, this would be one of the biggest wins for children and families since the start of the school choice program, enabling all children to have access to world-class courses, materials, and other educational supports, no matter their background or where they are in the state.**

It will provide more low- and middle-income families with opportunities they are currently denied: to choose the school that is right for their child's individual needs, even if they cannot afford private school tuition and are unable to move to a different school district.

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<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.wisconsin.edu/education-reports-statistics/download/educational\\_statistics/2018-Remedial-Report-Financial.pdf](https://www.wisconsin.edu/education-reports-statistics/download/educational_statistics/2018-Remedial-Report-Financial.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wifederationforchildren.org/research/>

Parents with children attending public schools would be able to choose resources or courses from a variety of providers. This will allow students affected by COVID-related learning loss to catch up on their own terms and will protect families in the future if schools close again.

The bill also supports local school districts by allowing them to focus on what they do best, while empowering parents to choose the foreign language, career and technical education, early college, and other coursework that work best for their children.

When parents are given options, they will choose schools based on better academic performance.<sup>4</sup> Right now, over 46,000 students use a voucher to attend a private school of their choosing. **But we should not limit educational freedom based upon income and where a family lives.**

AB970 unapologetically says that this Legislature will do everything possible to help children and families get into schools that work for them, and that give the children the best shot to succeed. **Members of the committee, let's be bold again in Wisconsin.** Please support moving AB 970 to the full Assembly.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15582159.2019.1595949>



February 16, 2022

Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 970, a proposal by Representative Wittke and Senator Roth regarding the expansion of the parental choice programs and creating an education expense reimbursement program.

I am the High Point Christian School principal in Madison and Mount Horeb and the Executive Director of Impact Christian Schools. Our network of 5 private schools around Dane and Sauk Counties all participate in the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program. Collectively, our schools serve 908 students, of which 387 or 42.6% participate using the WPCP. AB 970 will expand access to the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program, making it easier for more families to access high-quality educational options and for our schools to serve more students.

#### AB 970 Eliminates the Grade Point Entry

The application process for students desiring to participate through the WPCP allows applications only between February 1 and April 20. In 2020, COVID shut down schools in mid-March throughout the state. No school (including all of our Impact Christian schools) was open for in-person students until the end of the 2019-20 school year. During the summer, it seemed as if COVID was abating until late July of 2020. In Dane County, in the very last weeks of August 2020, our Public Health department closed all schools to in-person students above second grade. Impact Christian Schools joined a lawsuit that received an injunction allowing students to participate in person in all grades. When the ruling was issued in June of 2021, we had prevailed before the Wisconsin State Supreme Court.

Although we were open to in-person instruction, most public schools in Dane County only provided 100% virtual instruction in grades above second. During that time, several families enrolled privately at our schools. Had there been a mechanism for them to enroll as participants in the WPCP, several would have qualified. Since there was no mechanism, they found a way to pay for private tuition. The following year, as they were now enrolled in private schools in grades that do not allow entry points for currently enrolled students, they were all prohibited from participating in the WPCP (unless they had students in 4K, K, 1<sup>st</sup>, or 9<sup>th</sup> grades). The provision was written into the statutes, and it was unclear how many students outside of Milwaukee and Racine counties would desire to take advantage of the new WPCP program. Several years later, the entry points are only making it harder for families below 220% of the poverty level to qualify and enter the program. It is time to remove the points of entry provisions (MPCP and RPCP do not contain these restrictions).

#### AB 970 Eliminates the income limitation

Though the number of families seeking financial aid to afford private tuition has dropped with the advent of the WPCP, there are still families whose income does not allow them to consider enrolling without significant financial aid. It is especially challenging when families have multiple children. In addition, the gap between the MPCP/RPCP (300% of the poverty limit) and WPCP (220%) is preventing families from electing the school option they prefer for their children.

I urge you to expand educational options to families across the state by supporting AB 970.

Thank you,

Charles "Chuck" Moore, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

## **Bender-Olson, Katie**

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**From:** Wendy Dorn <wworthendorn@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 5:35 PM  
**To:** Rep.Thiesfeldt; Rep.Kitchens; Rep.Wittke; Rep.Ramthun; Rep.Wichgers; Rep.Mursau;  
Rep.Duchow; Rep.Rozar; Rep.Behnke; Rep.Penterman; Rep.Pope; Rep.Hebl;  
Rep.Considine; Rep.Vruwink; Rep.Myers; Bender-Olson, Katie  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of AB 970

Dear Representatives Thiesfeldt, Kitchens, Wittke, Wichgers, Ramthun, Mursau, Duchow, Rozar, Behnke, Penterman, Pope, Hebl, Considine, Vruwink, Myers, and Bender-Olson,

I am writing in support of AB 970. I believe that every parent in the State of Wisconsin should be able to take their school tax dollars to any accredited school that fits their values and educational priorities for their children.

I am a resident of Elmbrook Schools. After working inside the school district, attending many school board meetings, and getting to know several school board members, I have come to the conclusion that our school board is allowing leftist ideology to corrupt the curriculum of every subject, and infuse the culture of our schools.

We pulled our son out of Elmbrook Schools, but we still pay \$3500 in school tax dollars to the district each year. We would prefer to put that money toward our son's annual private school tuition, but our income is too high to participate in the parental choice program.

This is unfair taxation without responsible representation. If we expand the parental choice voucher program to include all interested parents, we can interrupt the never-ending pipeline of taxpayer dollars that is funding leftist ideology in our public schools.

Giving every family in the State of Wisconsin control over their school tax dollars will choke out public schools that are unresponsive to parent/community values and expectations.

It will also neuter the unmitigated influence of teachers' unions and leftist diversity/equity/inclusion (DEI) hustlers that are siphoning public tax revenue to fund their push to install leftist ideology in teacher training/evaluation policies, curricula, hiring practices and school policies.

There is also a concerted effort by these DEI hustlers to take policy-making power away from our school board members and consolidate it under the expanding roles of unelected district administrators.

I have seen this occurring first-hand in Elmbrook Schools, and I have heard reports from parents in other local districts that the same things are happening there.

Thanks for considering my views; I hope you will vote in favor of AB 970.

Wendy Dorn  
19020 Lothmoor Drive  
Brookfield, WI 53045





**Testimony to the Assembly Education Committee  
Opposition to Assembly Bills 966, 967, 968, 970, 971, 975**  
submitted by the  
**Wisconsin Education Association Council**  
February 10, 2022

The Wisconsin Education Association Council, representing teachers and education support professionals in Wisconsin Public Schools, are opposed to Assembly Bills 966, 967, 968, 970, 971 and 975. These bills are circulating at a time when lawmakers should be working with parents and educators to help our students and develop sustainable solutions to the exodus of educators leaving the classroom. The following is a quote from WEAC President and teacher Peggy Wirtz-Olsen:

“Legislators need to stop politicizing our schools and pitting families against each other with divisive proposals. The supporters of these bills are making an already difficult job that much more complicated for educators. These bills are reckless and could cause the destruction of our public school system.

“The people who know best how these proposed laws would impact public schools – educators – can’t even attend the public hearing to give input because they are at work – keeping schools open and teaching students. We have not been consulted nor given time to educate the bills’ sponsors on the consequences of these bills on our students and classrooms. The bills’ sponsors are urged to take time to discuss these proposals with the front-line professionals who teach the children.”

Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, President  
Bob Baxter, Executive Director

Dear Representative Thiesfeldt,

I am writing to you today to ask for your support of education bills AB 966, 967, 968, 970, 971 and 975. As a parent of a child enrolled in a Wisconsin public school, I believe legislation is the only way to restore parental rights in our schools. As things stand now, I have little faith in our public schools, and I see no evidence that DPI wants to operate with parental input into our schools. I want parents and taxpayers to have a say in our children's education – not a faceless bureaucracy. I believe these bills are a step in the right direction. Thank you for giving parents a much needed voice.

Doug Dyer  
Elmbrook Parent and Resident

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to you today to ask for your support of education bills AB 966, 967, 968, 970, 971 and 975. All of these bills are vital to maintaining the integrity of our educational system. Wisconsin parents have lost all faith and trust in our government schools and DPI. These bills help to give authority back to the parents, taxpayers and stakeholders, to determine what is best for our children's education. Thank you for your service and commitment to improving our K-12 education system, and for helping to get Wisconsin schools back to success.

Most Sincerely,

Heidi Anderson  
Brookfield, WI

Dear Representative Thiesfeldt,

I am writing to you today to ask for your support of education bills AB 966, 967, 968, 970, 971 and 975. All of these bills are vital to maintaining the integrity of our educational system. Wisconsin parents have lost all faith and trust in our government schools and DPI. These bills help to give authority back to the parents, taxpayers and stakeholders, to determine what is best for our children's education. Thank you for your service and commitment to improving our K-12 education system, and for helping to get Wisconsin schools back to success.

Emily Donohue  
Elmbrook Parent and Resident

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to you today to ask for your support of education bills AB 966, 967, 968, 970, 971 and 975. All of these bills are vital to maintaining the integrity of our educational system. Wisconsin parents have lost all faith and trust in our government schools and DPI. These bills help to give authority back to the parents, taxpayers and stakeholders, to determine what is best for our children's education. Thank you for your service and commitment to improving our K-12 education system, and for helping to get Wisconsin schools back to success.

Thank you.  
Eric Valk  
950 Chester St.  
Brookfield, WI