

June 22, 2007

Dear Rep. Vukmir:

Thank you for your efforts over the last year on the Legislative Council Special Committee on Charter Schools. I appreciate that I was able to participate in the discussion of charter schools in Wisconsin. I am sorry that I will be unable to attend the June 25, 2007, meeting, so I submit this letter stating my positions on the charter school issues before this committee. Please share this letter with members of the committee.

First, I am opposed to expanding the types of entities that may establish or contract for the establishment of charter schools and the types of entities with which a chartering entity may contract to operate a charter school or any expansion of the Milwaukee and Racine Charter School Program. Under current law, these independent 2r charter schools result in a reduction in general school aids to school districts across the state totaling \$39,862,217. Current law allows local school districts to make up for the reduction by increasing property taxes. Thus the current independent 2r charter school program results in a statewide property tax increase of nearly \$40 million and should not be expanded. Additionally a significant and real need for additional chartering entities was never established or proven to the committee. The committee was presented with evidence of inquiries by possible additional charter authorizers, but no significant need for additional authorizers of charter schools was ever established.

The Appleton School District in which I teach has created great charter schools that work, schools chartered by the school district. Supt. of Schools Tom Scullen believed that schools chartered by the local school district work best. The locally-elected school board oversees all schools in the district including the charter schools, demonstrating true local control by local citizens.

Second, I am opposed to creating a process to appeal a decision not to establish a charter school or not to renew a charter. Again no convincing evidence was presented to the committee establishing that a significant need exists to overturn the decision of a locally-elected school board. I believe a locally-elected school board best serves the interests of its local citizens and its decisions on charter schools in its school district should not be overturned by a state agency or an appointed body.

I believe that district-sponsored charter schools give school districts an opportunity to create innovative programs. Charter schools should be public schools and school employees should be full partners in the design, implementation, and governance of charter schools. Charter

school employees should be employees of the school district and, therefore, eligible to participate in the Wisconsin Retirement System and should be represented by a union. Only local school boards should have the power to create charter schools. Charter school funding should not disproportionately divert resources from traditional public schools. Charter school programs must be qualitatively different from what is available in mainstream public schools. Finally I believe Wisconsin's charter school law should not be changed.

Thank you and the committee for all its work on charter school issues. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Legislative Council Study Committee on Charter Schools.

Sincerely,

Noelle Mudrak

Noelle Mudrak
President, Appleton Education Association