

# EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION CENTER

School District of West Allis - West Milwaukee, et al.

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March 23, 2011

Dear Senate Education Committee Chair Olson, Vice-Chair Vukmir, Committee Members: Senators Grothman, Darling, Jauch, Vinehout, and Larson:

I am writing today to provide input regarding Senate Bill 22. Our most significant concern rests on the fact that at a time when state aid to local school districts is being cut by over \$843 million in the proposed 2011 – 2013 state budget and school districts across the state face decisions about closing schools and cutting programs and staff, etc. this proposed bill creates an opportunity for more public education dollars to be diverted into privatized education entities.

Specifically, we are concerned about proposals that allow independent charter schools to be mandated in our communities by individuals and entities not accountable to the voters of our community. This is not the time to be diverting public dollars away from school districts to other entities that operate outside a process which has created a check and balance for public schools and public dollars. Currently aid to independent charter schools is funded by a reduction in general school aid to public school districts. This means that it comes from the same pot of money, which now has been reduced. This is verified by the proposed biennial budget which will produce an unprecedented massive reduction in funding to public schools throughout Wisconsin. Therefore, this translates into no new money available for this potential charter legislation to occur. In addition we believe that independent charter schools, which receive public funding, needs to be served by an accountability standard. Therefore, we also have a concern that the concept of a charter school authorizing board diminishes that local accountability.

The West Allis – West Milwaukee School District supports charter schools authorized by local public school boards and supports efforts to ensure that charter schools serve their original, intended purpose which is to foster greater innovation in public schools, for the benefit of all students, outside of traditional boundaries with public dollars that are accountable. We firmly believe that:

- School boards should be the sole chartering agency.
- Exemptions from identified state standards and restraints may be allowed in exchange for accountability to clear and high standards of student outcomes.
- Funding arrangements should be determined by the local school board.
- Charter schools must be required to maintain health and safety standards for pupils and staff, operate as nonsectarian entities, and be open to all district students without charge for tuition and non discriminatory regardless of ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, achievement or behavior.

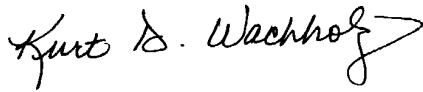
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A closing thought... There needs to be an established set of rules that creates a level playing field for all venues. When public dollars are received by public or private entities, independent charter schools, voucher schools, choice schools, and any private or public agency that receives public funds there must be some basic fundamental equality in the areas of:

- Financial accountability and transparency
- Common standard achievement measurement with accountability and proof of disclosure
- Requirement that ALL students are accepted and services provided
- ALL Special Education students are accepted and services provided
- All teachers are required to have the same licensure requirements
- Equality/uniformity when it comes to standards
- Requirement to adhere to the same mandates, both funded and unfunded, as public education
- Provide flexibility with demonstrated accountability.

Please feel free to contact me at any time for further input or clarification.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kurt D. Wachholz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Kurt D. Wachholz,  
Superintendent of Schools  
West Allis – West Milwaukee School District, et al.