

September 16, 2013

Dear legislator:

As the leadership team for the Green Bay Area Public School District, we endorse the Olsen/Kestell school accountability legislation and ask you to support it.

We thank Senator Luther Olsen and Rep. Steve Kestell for their hard work in drafting the bill that would hold private and religious schools receiving public funding through vouchers to the same accountability standards as public schools.

The Olsen/Kestell bill is an excellent start toward accountability. But we believe the bill would be strengthened by amending it to make ALL schools receiving public money subject to the state's Open Meetings and Open Records laws.

All 424 public school districts in Wisconsin are subject to the Open Meetings and Open Records laws and they provide the public with critical vehicles to view how public money is being spent. The Open Meetings and Open Records laws also should apply to private and religious schools receiving public money through vouchers.

Work on the school accountability legislation began two years ago with a task force chaired by Governor Scott Walker and State Superintendent Tony Evers, along with Olsen and Kestell.

Both the governor and state schools superintendent have stated publicly that all schools receiving public funding should be held to the same standards.

As you know, the 2013-15 state budget expanded the private school voucher program statewide – a program that is paid for by all Wisconsin taxpayers. What the budget bill failed to address, however, is ensuring that private and religious schools receiving public funding are held accountable to the same strict standards governing all 424 public school districts in Wisconsin.

We are positive that you, as guardians of the public's money, want to make certain that the public's money is being well spent. Currently, that is not always the case with private and religious schools in Milwaukee and Racine that receive public money through vouchers.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or would like further information.

Sincerely,

Members of the Green Bay Area Public School Board of Education

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