



TERRY KATSMAS

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Date: December 17, 2015
To: Assembly Committee on Education
From: Representative Terry Katsma
Re: Assembly Bill 602: Christian Schools International Accreditation

Dear Chairman Thiesfeldt and Committee Members,

Thank you for convening a public hearing on Assembly Bill 602, a bill that would add Wisconsin to the long list of states that recognize Christian Schools International's (CSI's) accreditation program on its own merits.

CSI was founded in 1920 and was the first national organization to serve Christian schools in the United States. Several well-respected schools in the communities I represent (including Oostburg Christian School and Sheboygan County Christian High School) have been CSI member schools since they were founded decades ago; another, Sheboygan Christian School, was a founding member of CSI in 1920.

Until CSI elected in 2012 not to continue its paid membership in the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA), its accredited Wisconsin schools qualified automatically for our state's various parental school choice programs. This decision was made partly due to cost and partly due to a changing national paradigm as to how accrediting agencies' partnerships are organized. **Wisconsin's CSI-accredited schools still qualify today for Wisconsin school choice programs, but individual schools now have to take unnecessary extra steps and pay an additional cost to document their accreditation through a third party.**

CSI Accreditation is recognized today in 21 other states including neighbors such as Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan and South Dakota. Two more states (including Minnesota) will recognize CSI Accreditation soon. In fact, Wisconsin is the only state in which CSI's choice to discontinue its NCPSA membership resulted in the loss of state recognition. Passage of this bill into law would enable CSI-accredited schools—like most other private schools in Wisconsin—to file only one accreditation report each year with one accrediting agency, thereby saving these schools money and cutting through unnecessary red tape in the documentation of their existing state approval.

CSI's accreditation protocol compares favorably with the many other accrediting agencies whose member schools are not required to undertake the extra steps toward state recognition that now burden CSI-accredited schools. I urge you to support CSI Accreditation's application to resume its state-approved status in Wisconsin.



CHRIS KAPENGA

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Testimony on AB 602

Assembly Committee on Education

December 17th, 2015

Thank you Chairman Thiesfeldt and committee members for hearing testimony today on AB 602. I also want to thank Representative Katsma for leading on this legislation in the Assembly.

AB 602 recognizes Christian Schools International (CSI) as an accreditation agency in statute, along with several other agencies, for participation in school choice programs in Wisconsin. This bill also adds (CSI) to the list of entities that qualifies private schools to participate in the Special Needs Scholarship program.

Currently, CSI is recognized by the Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation agency (WRISA) and was formerly a member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA), which has the authority to recognize accreditation agencies in the State of Wisconsin. CSI was formerly a member of NCPSA but has recently withdrawn its membership. When CSI voluntarily left NCPSA, they unknowingly lost their ability to accredit schools in Wisconsin. CSI voluntarily withdrew its membership from NCPSA, along with many other Christian school accreditors, due to the changing landscape of schools in the nation. Many agencies are shifting to becoming state recognized as opposed to membership driven. CSI, along with other accrediting agencies, saw an ability to forgo the differences in philosophy as well as to alleviate the added headaches in the form of fees and additional red tape that come with working as a member to a larger organization.

CSI has been recognized in Wisconsin by several accrediting agencies such as WRISA, NCPSA, AdvancED, and the Wisconsin North Central Association. In Iowa, Illinois, and Kansas, CSI is recognized as an independent accrediting agency and is accrediting schools in 21 states with more in the works. They have been around for over 100 years and have been overwhelmingly recognized as a reputable accrediting agency, including here in Wisconsin already. This bill will continue to allow CSI to accredit schools in the state of Wisconsin without having to jump through the hoops of going through a different organization.

I urge your support of this bill. Thank you Mr. Chair and I would be happy to answer any questions.



MICHAEL SCHRAA

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Testimony in Support of AB 602

Thank you Chairman Thiesfeldt, Vice Chair Kitchens and members of the committee for giving me the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation to expand the list of accrediting entities for private schools taking part in the choice or special needs programs.

A constituent that I represent in the 53rd Assembly District approached me earlier this year requesting that the Association of Christian Schools International be added to the list of accrediting entities. We drafted a bill to accomplish that goal. In seeing that Representative Katsma introduced this bill, I decided to co-sponsor and testify in support of his bill and request that an amendment be considered to add the Association of Christian Schools International. While their names and operations are similar, they are two separate organizations.

The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) has been in existence since 1978 and has over 25,000 member schools worldwide that serve over 5 million students. The accreditation protocol and process of the ACSI is recognized and approved in twenty six states. ACSI also has accreditation partnerships with AdvancED (the parent organization of the North Central Association, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools). The ACSI is an accreditation partner with the Middle States Association, the Western Association of Colleges and Schools. ACSI also partners with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges as well as the Council of International Schools. Each of these organizations has partnered with ACSI after a standards and process review and approval by the respective commission.

ACSI has been accrediting schools in Wisconsin for the past 20 years and presently has 27 member schools in the state. These schools are required to maintain the accreditation standards, and their status and progress is monitored through annual reporting, regional site visits, and renewal every five years. The ACSI regional office has been receiving a number of inquiries from member schools within Wisconsin regarding their accreditation and recognition from the State. They look forward to hopefully serving these schools and assisting them on the path of quality education.

ACSI is a great organization that helps educate children across the nation, and it would benefit our students to add them to the list of accrediting entities here in Wisconsin.

Thank you for listening to my testimony on this bill.

To: Assembly Committee on Education

From: Dee Pettack, Legislative Liaison

Date: December 17, 2015

Re: Statement for Information on Assembly Bill 602

Assembly Bill 602 (AB 602) adds Christian Schools International (CSI) to Wisconsin's statutory lists for approved accrediting agencies for the purposes of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, the Racine Parental Choice Program, and the statewide parental choice program and the Special Needs Scholarship program.

Currently the following accrediting agencies are available to private schools participating in the voucher programs:

1. Wisconsin North Central Association
2. Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation
3. Independent Schools Association of the Central States
4. Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation
5. National Lutheran School Accreditation
6. Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools
7. The diocese or archdiocese within which a private school is located
8. Any other organization recognized by the National Council for Private Schools

CSI's website lists the private schools it has accredited in Wisconsin. The table below provides the name of each private school accredited by CSI, whether the school participates in the choice programs, and whether the school is fully accredited by another accrediting entity under current law. According to the Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation's (WRISA's) website, every school currently accredited by CSI is also accredited by WRISA, a current accrediting organization for private school choice programs.

Schools Currently Accredited by CSI

<u>School Name</u>	<u>Choice Program Participant</u>	<u>Other Accreditation</u>
Brookfield Christian School	No	WRISA
CrossTrainers Academy	Yes	WRISA
Osstburg Christian School	Yes	WRISA
Randolph Christian School	No	WRISA
Sheboygan County Christian High School	Yes	WRISA
Central Wisconsin Christian School	Yes	WRISA
Delavan Christian School	No	WRISA
Racine Christian School	No	WRISA
Sheboygan Christian School	Yes	WRISA

A list of schools that have been previously accredited by CSI and their status are listed below:

School Name	Current Status
King's Academy	Converted to a Charter authorized by the City of Milwaukee
LifeSkills Academy	Terminated from Milwaukee Parental Choice Program
More than Conquerors Prep School	Terminated from Milwaukee Parental Choice Program
Whole Village Institute	Withdrew from the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program



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Testimony Regarding Assembly Bill 602

December 17, 2015

Public Hearing, Assembly Committee on Education

Wisconsin Family Ties appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on Assembly Bill 602. We are a statewide, parent-run organization serving families that include children and youth with social, emotional, behavioral or mental health challenges. In context of the work we do between families and schools, we would like to raise concerns regarding AB602, regarding authorizing Christian Schools International as an accrediting agency for schools participating in the Special Needs Scholarship Program, as well as other choice programs.

With the abrupt closure of the private LifeSkills Academy school in Milwaukee, in December 2013, sixty-six Wisconsin students were left suddenly without a school, with no prior notice. It was subsequently revealed that LifeSkills Academy II was operating in Florida, under the same management. LifeSkills Academy II declared a new-found expertise in Intellectual Disability and Emotional/Behavioral Disability, and began accepting McKay Scholarships under Florida's special needs voucher program.

LifeSkills Academy was accredited by Christian Schools International.

Two years later, this history gains renewed relevance with the rapid advancement of AB602.

In order to participate in the Special Needs Scholarship Program, students must forfeit rights and protections afforded to public-school students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Given this extra level of risk for vulnerable students that the program entails, it is imperative that remaining protections such as accreditation be as robust as possible.

At this point, the proposal to add Christian Schools International to the statutory list of approved accrediting agencies is moving so rapidly as to preclude the level of due diligence that is critical to protecting the interests of Wisconsin's students with special needs. Given the experience with LifeSkills Academy, Wisconsin Family Ties urges a thorough examination into the track record of Christian Schools International regarding voucher programs in Wisconsin and other states, particularly in special needs voucher programs. Absent such detailed information, accrediting authority should not be granted.

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By the numbers:

- **1920.** When Christian Schools International was founded in Chicago. Some of Wisconsin member schools have been part of Christian Schools International since their formation.
- **500** schools are currently served by Christian Schools International, **350** of those in the US, the others in Canada and throughout the world.
- **112** schools in the US are served by our accreditation programs.
- **9** schools in Wisconsin are served by Christian Schools International. See the attachment.
- **5** schools in Wisconsin are accredited by Christian Schools International.
 - Central Wisconsin Christian in Waupun,
 - Sheboygan Christian,
 - Sheboygan County Christian High,
 - Brookside Christian,
 - Cross Trainers Academy (one of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Schools).

Christian Schools International Accreditation's recognition in Wisconsin:

Until 2012 Christian Schools International's accreditation was recognized in Wisconsin because we were a member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPA).

- At the beginning of 2012 we chose to not renew our membership in NCPA
 - Rationale:
 - Many of our national Christian school accreditor peers had left NCPA by the time we did.
 - The accreditation landscape had changed since we joined NCPA. Our credibility/accountability partnerships were no longer through NCPA, but directly with the big Regional accrediting commissions and individual states.
- We are now tied into the national school accreditation world through the Regionals, the Alliance, and the Coalition of Christian School Accreditors.
- Christian Schools International Accreditation is recognized by many states or the vetting organization that the state has established to recognize accreditors. This is on our own merit (applications, five-year reviews, annual reports, state statutes, etc.), not through a third party.
- Wisconsin was the only state we lost recognition in because of not renewing NCPA membership.
- We are the lead partner with most national/international Regional accreditors: AdvancED (North Central, Southern Association, Northwest Association), WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges), and Middle States Association.
- Our accredited schools in Wisconsin currently receive recognition for state purposes like the parental choice programs, because of our long-standing partnership with WRISA (Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation).

- Being named directly as an approved school accreditor in Wisconsin’s state statutes would:
 - Enable our accredited schools to file only one annual report with one accrediting association.
 - Provide our accredited schools and Christian Schools International Accreditation with greater credibility and recognition in Wisconsin by not having to go through a third party.
 - Give Wisconsin DPI and School Choice Wisconsin’s programs more direct oversight of and input into Christian Schools International’s accreditation protocol and how it is specific to Wisconsin.
 - Provide our accredited schools with national recognition.

Wisconsin member schools:

<i>Wisconsin Member Schools</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>CSI Accreditation Expires</i>	<i>Other Accreditations</i>	<i>CSI Member Since</i>	<i>Year Founded</i>	<i>Grade Range</i>	<i>Current Enrollment</i>
<i>Brookfield Christian School</i>	Brookfield	7/31/2020	WRISA	1964	1963	P-8	257
<i>Central Wisconsin Christian School</i>	Waupun	7/31/2019	WRISA	1948	1948	P-12	287
<i>Cross Trainers Academy</i>	Milwaukee	10/31/2016	WRISA	2006	2006	P-9	215
<i>Delavan Christian School</i>	Delavan	--	WRISA	1952	1951	P-8	93
<i>Oostburg Christian School</i>	Oostburg	--	WRISA	1947	1947	P-8	151
<i>Racine Christian School</i>	Racine	--	WRISA	1929	1929	K-8	132
<i>Randolph Christian School</i>	Randolph	--	WRISA	1923	1913	P-8	84
<i>Sheboygan Christian School</i>	Sheboygan	7/31/2018	WRISA	1920	1898	P-8	131
<i>Sheboygan County Christian High School</i>	Sheboygan	7/31/2017	WRISA	1969	1969	9-12	103

Links:

Christian Schools International website: www.csionline.org

Christian Schools International Accreditation webpage: www.csionline.org/accreditation