



— Alberta Darling —

Wisconsin State Senator · District 8

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Education
Senate Bills 964 & 965
2/23/2022

Thank you committee members for taking the time to hear Senate Bills 964 and 965.

These two bills are part of the Empowering Parents K-12 Education Reform Package to address the growing demand from parents to tailor their children's individual education, establish accountability, and encourage collaboration with educators. Increased scrutiny and parental involvement in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the need for fundamental educational reforms while presenting a once-in-a-generation opportunity for a course correction.

Senate Bills 964 and 965 will increase access and availability of public charter school options in Wisconsin. Currently, over fifty thousand students in over 230 schools take advantage of this option and are enrolled in public charter schools throughout the state. Statistically, these non-traditional public school options outperform their traditional public-school counterparts.

Under current law, charter schools authorized by an entity other than a school board must have a duplication provision in their chartering contract. This duplication provision states that the governing board of the charter school may open one or more additional charter schools if all of the charter schools operated by the governing board were assigned to one of the top two performance categories in the most recent school and school district report cards. Senate Bill 965 requires that charter schools authorized by school districts have the identical duplication provision in their chartering contracts. This bill ensures our highest performing charter schools do not need to go through hoops and hurdles to provide more students with this high quality public school option.

Also under current law, charter schools may be authorized by school boards, the City of Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin (UW)-Milwaukee, UW-Parkside, Madison Area Technical College, the Waukesha County executive, any UW institution, any technical college district board, the College of Menominee Nation, the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe

College, and the Office of Educational Opportunity in the UW System. Assembly Bill 968 creates a new Charter School Authorizing Board to approve new independent charter schools statewide. The ten member, bi-partisan appointed board will serve four year terms for no more than two consecutive terms.

Alternatives to traditional public schools continue to be in high demand for many parents. As parents continue to pursue these alternatives in historic numbers, it is more important than ever that we continue to look for ways to increase these high quality options. According to recent Department of Public Instruction numbers, independent charter schools reported a total third Friday of September 2021 headcount of 10,691, an increase of 15.6 percent from September 2020. The previous increase, from 2019 to 2020, was 1.5 percent.

I want to thank Representative Wittke for leading these efforts in the Assembly, and thank you again committee members for hearing Senate Bills 964 and 965. I hope to have your support.

MMAC

**METROPOLITAN MILWAUKEE
ASSOCIATION OF COMMERCE**

**Written Testimony: Senate Committee on Education
Andrew Davis, Director for Government Affairs
Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce
February 23, 2022**

Madam Chairwoman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on these important education issues. It is important that we share with you the value that our membership, the business community, places on K-12 education and the role it plays in our mission.

The MMAC is a regional chamber serving nearly 2,000 member companies that employ 300,000 people in the metro-Milwaukee area. It is our mission to invest capital, grow business and create jobs. K-12 education has always been a top priority for our organization. We have always been an active participant with an aggressive agenda to increase educational attainment and improve career development to help feed the talent pipeline for our members and employers in the region.

MMAC has a long history of engaging in education reform, including the formation of a K-12 system fueled by parent options with the goal to develop citizens as skilled, innovative and productive lifelong learners. Historically we have worked with education stakeholders and partners to help provide our citizens with a pathway to great educational outcomes through our K-12 system, two-year, technical and four-year plus degree granting institutions. Educational attainment and a discipline of lifelong learning are the best anchors for prosperity. Unfortunately, this reality is eluding too many of our citizens-- leaving them without opportunity and hope. Leaving Milwaukee short on the talent it needs to thrive.

It is for the reasons stated above that we care very strongly about the following MMAC agenda items:

- A fair and balanced school report card that rewards schools educating some of our most troubled students below grade level.
- Automatic charter reauthorization and replication of high performing charter schools, that includes non-instrumentality charter schools.
- Expansion of charter school authorizing entities and options
- Addressing the issue of under-used and vacant school facilities in Milwaukee. Both taxpayers and parents will benefit from any use of these empty facilities owned by the City of Milwaukee.
- Closing the charter and choice per pupil funding equity gap. The disparity threatens to financially strangle quality schools and reduce educational options. This inequity must be addressed as we are already seeing some schools in Milwaukee close because of it.

Too much of the debate in Milwaukee is over the type of school students attend and too little on results. Whether attending a traditional public school, a public charter school or a school in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, ensuring that Milwaukee's children and future workforce have access to a world class education is not only a moral imperative, it is also an economic necessity.

There is no greater determinant of a region's prosperity than the educational attainment and workforce skills of its citizens. We need an unapologetic and unwavering commitment to students and families that attend schools that deliver uncharacteristic results, regardless of what type of school they are in. Getting children ready to learn is the first step, and getting them ready to work is a necessary step.

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CITY FORWARD COLLECTIVE

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Milwaukee, WI 53212
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February 23, 2022

City Forward Collective, a Milwaukee-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to eliminate educational inequity by ensuring every Milwaukee child has access to a high-quality school, is in support of SB 965/AB 967 and SB 964/AB 968, both of which address charter school authorizing.

We offer the following additional comments for information purposes to the committee:

- a. SB 965/AB 967 on automatic replication: we would note that while including district-authorized charters is a positive step, new schools in growing charter networks often take 4-5 years to reach the existing statutory eligibility requirements and thus the growth plans of typical high-performing charter operators could be slowed, and eligibility even harder to attain with the proposed report card changes
- b. Generally, regarding both bills: we believe there remain opportunities to make these two bills more impactful on growing high-performing charter schools, and we would welcome the chance to work with the legislature to offer amendments that would address other policy barriers to the expansion of high-quality charter schools that are not related to authorizing, including
 - i. Establishing model charter contracts that protect core autonomies for all charter schools (district-authorized and independently-authorized);
 - ii. Permitting entities that operate multiple charter schools to better coordinate finances and operations, by permitting operator-level financial audits and “feeder pattern” enrollment policies;
 - iii. Ensuring that federal aids received by a district or LEA on behalf of students enrolled in public charter schools are passed through to the charter operator; and
 - iv. Addressing inequities in funding levels between public charter schools and traditional public schools, including by increasing the per-pupil funding level for public charter schools, and by providing for public charter schools to be able to access local revenues generated via operating referenda



TO: Members, Senate Committee on Education

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

DATE: February 23, 2022

RE: Support for Senate Bill 964 & Senate Bill 965

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 964 and Senate Bill 965. We thank Senator Darling and Representative Wittke for authoring these bills, which will expand high-performing charter schools throughout 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 able to access to a good education so they are ready to participate in the workforce.

Senate Bill 965 helps accomplish this goal by requiring that the contract between a charter school governing board and a school board allow the governing board to open additional charter schools if all of the current charter schools operating under the board are high performing. Senate Bill 964 creates the Charter School Authorizing Board, attached to the Department of Public Instruction. This board will be able to approve charter school applications. These bills help circumvent bureaucratic hurdles and streamline the process to allow more charter schools to open throughout Wisconsin.

WMC supports expanding the authorizers of charter schools. We believe that Wisconsin charter schools are providing innovative solutions for students, including meeting community and student needs that many traditional public schools are unable to fulfill. Many employers are excited about charter schools that are incorporating career pathways, career and technical training and hands-on experiences into their curriculum. As Wisconsin employers are facing severe worker shortages, these innovative programs will help attract young people into high-demand, well-paying jobs that employers currently are unable to fill.

WMC urges Members of the Assembly Committee on Education to vote in favor of Senate Bill 964 and Senate Bill 965 to ensure our state's youth have access to increased educational opportunities.



ROBERT WITTKE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 62nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
TESTIMONY: SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
February 23, 2022

Madame Chair and Committee Members,

Recently, a constituent emailed this comment to me, “Our schools have failed our children because they have become a social experiment”. That sentiment, personal experience, and three years as Board President of Racine Unified School District drives me to push education reform from talk to action for our children. Thank you, Madame Chair and Committee Members, for taking time to hold a public hearing on this package of K-12 Education Reform bills.

Members, with all due respect, we can no longer let the status quo in education be our guide. When Senator Darling came to me with these proposals asking for me to join the effort, I was enthusiastic. She knows well how important it is for us to take action for our children. Thank you, Senator Darling.

In a recent statement from State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly, she said “Our schools are facing major challenges, many of which existed long before COVID-19...” “We need solutions to these challenges...” and I couldn’t agree more, we just have a different way of getting there. Let me summarize four bills I’ve co-authored for our children and their parents. **Senate Bill 966 (SB 966)** would require the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to use the Administrative Rules process to establish the method and formulas it will use in creating school and school district report cards. Specifically how pupil achievement and growth in reading and mathematics is determined. Schools should be able to count on a standard guide each year.

Senate Bill 964 (SB 964) and **Senate Bill 965 (SB 965)** team up to allow growth in Wisconsin’s already successful charter school program. Charter schools are a popular option that parents have used, with success, and SB 964 would create the Charter School Authorizing Board and allow it to authorize independent charter schools. Charter schools under current law may be authorized by school boards, the City of Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Parkside, Madison Area Technical College, the Waukesha County executive to name some of the authorizing entities. **SB 965** would allow increased access to charter schools by giving high-performing charter schools – those ranked in the top two performance categories in the most recent report card – to duplicate themselves. The duplication process is currently part of the charter contract and SB 965 expands the provision to these high performers.

Senate Bill 963 (SB 963) would reorganize the Milwaukee Public School System (MPS). This bill creates a Redistricting and Implementation Commission made up of the Governor and two appointees, the City of Milwaukee Mayor and two appointees, and the State Superintendent of Schools. Their charge is to look at the current district make up, student population and school buildings and determine how to establish four to eight new school districts in place of MPS. In the mid 2000’s a proposal was introduced to break up MPS; it failed. Today, too many children in MPS are failing and it must stop. We just can’t continue to spend hours and hours talking about what’s wrong with our schools then sit on our hands and do nothing. **SB 963** is a good starting point.

Our students and their parents, deserve better than status quo. I believe these bold proposals encourage action. Thank you again for holding this public hearing today.



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February 23, 2022

Madame Chair Darling and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of Senate Bill 964, a proposal by Senator Darling and Representative Wittke regarding the creation of a charter-school-authorizing board to allow for more opportunities for independent charter schools.

Wisconsin’s public charter schools can be authorized either by a local school district or a different governmental entity. Since the early 1990s, Wisconsin has grown the list of approved entities that can authorize charter schools. Today, there are seven categories of government entities that can authorize charter schools. The number of entities that can approve charter schools often used by opponents as justification for not adding more. But the reality is that most do not use this authority. In fact, out of 34 entities with the authority to authorize charter schools, only 5 of them—about 14%—actually use it.¹

Government Entity with Authorizing Power	Number of Charter Schools 2021-22
Common Council of the City of Milwaukee	7
Waukesha County Executive	0
College of Menominee Nation	0
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College	2
UW-System Office of Educational Opportunity	7
Any Chancellor of the UW System	
UW-Milwaukee	15
UW-Parkside	1
UW-Eau Claire	0
UW-Green Bay	0
UW-La Crosse	0
UW-Madison	0
UW-Oshkosh	0
UW-Platteville	0
UW-River Falls	0
UW-Stevens Point	0

¹ DPI Quick Facts Wisconsin Charter Schools, https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/parental-education-options/Charter-Schools/pdf/Wisconsin_Charter_Schools_Quick_Facts.pdf



Government Entity with Authorizing Power	Number of Charter Schools 2021-22
UW-Stout	0
UW-Superior	0
UW-Whitewater	0
Each technical college district board	
Gateway Technical College	0
MATC	0
Blackhawk	0
CVTC	0
Fox Valley	0
Lakeshore	0
Madison College	0
Mid-State	0
Moraine Park	0
Nicolet College	0
Northcentral	0
Northeast	0
Northwood Tech	0
Southwest	0
Waukesha County	0
Western	0

The lack of active authorizers became a problem for Lake Country Classical Academy (LCCA), a charter school that opened this year in Oconomowoc. The school leadership spent a year-and-a-half reaching out to independent charter-school authorizers and local school districts. They met with a couple different school districts in the Lake Country area and even considered being an instrumentality charter school of either district, but neither district was interested. Ultimately, the leadership applied with three of the six independent authorizers, and fortunately the LCO Ojibwe College stepped up to support LCCA.

Once LCCA was authorized, they experienced a high demand for this alternative education option—a classical, content-rich curriculum paired with a more traditional pedagogy. Currently enrollment stands at approximately 400 students in grades K-9, which includes some families driving more than an hour each direction to get their kids to and from LCCA every day. The school recently held their lottery for new students for the 2022-23 school year. 96% of the current student population is returning next year, with a total of 471 students enrolled for next year. Another 265 students are currently on the waitlist, which is a huge testament to the community demand for alternative choices in public education.

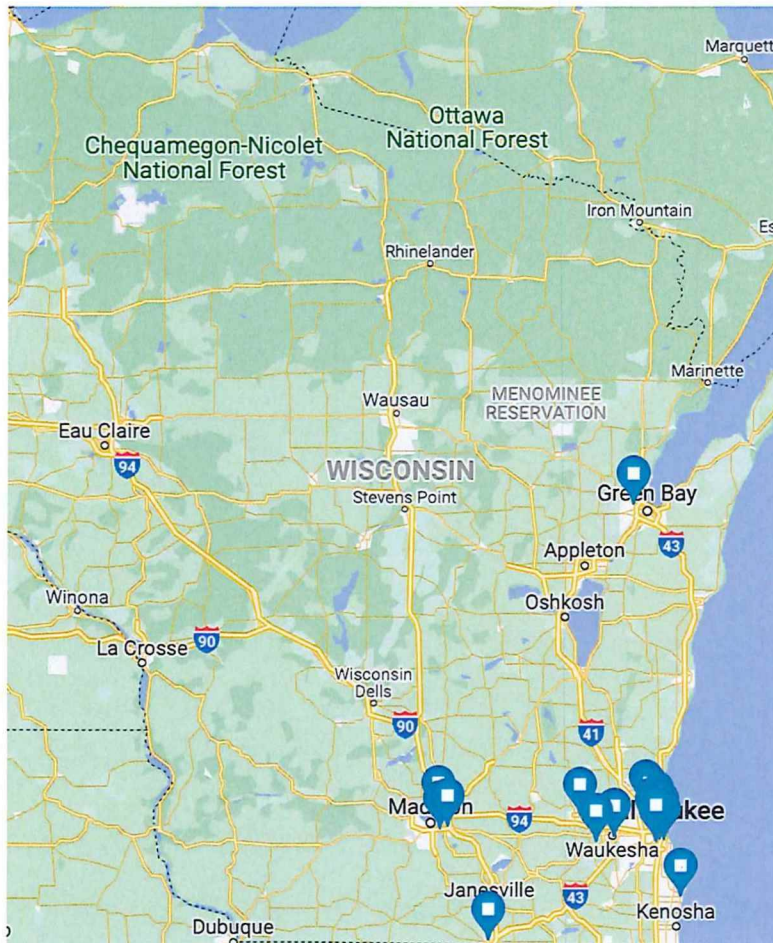
This demand for charter schools is not unique to LCCA. For example, the Office of Educational Opportunity more than doubled its number of charter schools from three in 2020-21 to seven in 2021-22. They are in the process of adding six more schools, four of which will open this fall,



and two more the following September. Similarly, charter school enrollment has grown over the last few years. In 2018-2019, enrollment in independent charter schools was just of 8,000 students. By 2021-22, average enrollment is expected to be around 10,500.²

SB 964 is the right response to the lack of participating authorizers and increased demand from Wisconsin parents. By creating The Charter School Authorizing Board, SB 964 gives the board the authority to authorize additional independent charter schools. This board could have a statewide focus and expand charter schools into new areas across the state.

Currently, many of the 32 independent charter schools are limited to urban areas, such as Milwaukee and Madison. Creating another authorizer that is not regionally specific will expand the options available for school leaders and parents. SB 964 also creates a board that is represented by the Department of Public Instruction, the state legislators and community members. The breadth of these appointments can expand the community representation statewide.



² DPI Historical Chart -Headcount and FTE of independent charter schools. The 2021-22 FTE count is not yet audited. <https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/charter-schools/current/2r-membership>



We urge the committee to support SB 964 and provide additional high-quality, public-school options to Wisconsin families.

Thank you,

Libby Sobic
Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty
libby@will-law.org

February 23, 2022

To: Senate Committee on Education

Re: Testimony in support of SB 964 and SB 962

Senator Darling and Fellow Committee Members,

Thank you for today's hearing. I come before you today in support of Senate bill 962, and Senate Bill 964, and ask for your support as well. These bills are inextricably linked in my opinion, and that is why I want to address them in combination.

I am a professional working mother of a 7 year old, and we reside in the New Berlin School District. Like many other parents, I watched as the school closures, mandates, and other overreaching government actions impacted my child and my family, directly. My daughter was shut out of school during her 4K year, and as a result of public school districts taking away the rights of parents to make medical decisions for children - we removed her from the district and she was homeschooled for her Kindergarten year.

It was incredibly difficult for our family, but somehow we managed to make it work. Frankly, we had no choice if we wanted to retain any parental decision making at all with respect to not subjecting her to harmful school medical mandates.

When we discovered that a new charter school would be opening in time for her first grade year, we were elated. We loved the curriculum which focuses on classical teaching of core subjects, and we loved the focus on morals and ethics. Most of all, we loved how Lake Country Classical Academy promised to partner with us, and make us a partner in the education of our child. What a refreshing development!

So we applied, and were wait-listed. I was absolutely devastated. You see - there was no way that I was going to be able to continue to homeschool, and we simply cannot afford private school tuition at this time. I felt hopeless, and like I was going to be handing my child over to be taught things I do not agree with, by educators who have made plain that they prefer to instill their morals and values on students rather than allow that work to be done by parents.

Eventually, we made it in - and we love our school so much. The school is transparent about everything being taught via weekly newsletters and regular reviews of potentially sensitive topics - such as a recent unit about world religions. In an effort to respect everyone's views, the school sent home a detailed plan for this unit, showcasing how all major world religions would be represented equally and discussed in a manner that was not "pushing" any specific one, rather examining it from a historical lens. This type of transparency should be the norm - yet it's not. Parents across the state are begging for information only to be told it's "too much work" or as our state superintendent put it - "micromanaging" for parents to ask.

This is why making it easier for charters to open by creating the Charter School Authorizing Board is so vital - every parent deserves to be able to seek out alternative educational options

within the public school system if the current districts fail to meet the needs of their child or teachers refuse to partner with parents.

This is also why passing the Parents Bill of Rights is so incredibly vital - we must protect the relationship between parent and child, and ensure that medical decisions, educational decisions, and all other decisions are left to the people that know and love them best - their parents.

Nicole Balistreri
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TESTIMONY OF KRISTINA P. VOURAX
LCCA BOARD PRESIDENT & FOUNDER
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ON SENATE BILL 964
February 23, 2022

Ms. Chairman and members of the Senate Committee on Education, my name is Kristina Vourax, and I am the Board President and Founder of Lake Country Classical Academy. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 964, relating to the expansion of entities that may establish independent charter schools to include a Charter School Authorizing Board.

Based on my personal experience in founding an independent charter school and the challenges that our founding board faced in seeking authorization, the addition of a Charter School Authorizing Board is a greatly needed to establish charter schools in more rural areas of Wisconsin.

It took the LCCA founding board nearly two years to secure a charter school agreement. Our journey began in the fall of 2018 when we initially approached the school district where our founding board members lived and where our children went to school, but when there was no interest in working with us as an instrumentality or non-instrumentality charter school to provide a more traditional, teacher-led model, we decided to investigate the independent authorizer path. We quickly discovered that although there are dozens of higher ed institutions, as well as the Waukesha County Exec, who hold the power to authorize independent (2r or 2x) charter schools, very few of these independent authorizers actually exercise this gift. We first submitted a prospectus to UW Milwaukee and later to UW Madison charter school offices, and in both cases were not invited to submit a full application. It became clear that would not be wise to put all of our eggs in one basket, so we reached out to every single independent authorizer on the list. Other than the LCO Ojibwe College, we were encouraged to contact either UW Milwaukee or UW Madison. We reapproached our local school district, as well as another nearby school district which initially seemed like a promising option, but as these local options died on the vine, the LCO Ojibwe College invited us to submit a full application and later signed a charter school agreement with LCCA in May 2020.

Although thousands of children are thriving today thanks to charter schools authorized by UWM and UW Madison, there are many other children outside of Dane and Milwaukee Counties that would greatly benefit from alternative educational choices that charter schools provide. Our waitlist of 268 students (grades K-10) for the 2022-2023 academic school year is a testament to the rising demand for charter school alternatives. LCCA will never be big enough to accommodate the demand we're experiencing; however, we hope to help these families by working with other public schools – school districts and other independent charter schools that may

be interested in offering a classical option – to help raise the bar in K-12 education and bring in more families that have become disenchanted with public education. Education should not be political or about per pupil funding – it's about doing what's right and creating a brighter future for kids, and approving SB 964 is a huge step in the right direction toward achieving this goal.

Thank you for your consideration.

To: Legislature

Re: AB968/SB964 — Expanding Charter School Authorizers;
AB967/SB965 — Expanding High Quality District-Authorized Charter Schools; and
AB970/SB962 — Expanding the Voucher Program and Educational Reimbursement Program

Date: February 18, 2022

From: Mrs. Jody Geenen (1511 Primrose Lane, West Bend, WI 53090; 262-343-3486;
jodygeenen777@gmail.com)

This is my written testimony in SUPPORT of AB968/SB964 — Expanding Charter School Authorizers; AB967/SB965 — Expanding High Quality District-Authorized Charter Schools; and AB970/SB962 — Expanding the Voucher Program and Educational Reimbursement Program.

With public schools becoming more and more of centers for indoctrinating our children instead of being places solely for educating our children with truth-and-fact-based basic academics, parents need more options of where to send their children to school. Charter schools can be wonderful options, especially for those families who do not feel comfortable sending their children to local parochial schools. Therefore, our state needs to provide expansion of charter school authorizers, high quality district-authorized charter schools, and the voucher program and educational reimbursement program.

As a past school board candidate twice, I have been reviewing academic resources and curriculum for our school district. To my complete dismay, I have found the resources to be loaded with indoctrination instead of truth-and-fact-based academics that they are supposed to be. Parents don't always have time to review everything their students are being taught. They need to be able to put their children in the hands of educational systems they can trust.

These bills will help alleviate some of those issues. When money leaves the public schools to follow the students to charter schools and parochial schools, it negatively affects the budget of the public schools. This, in turn, creates an incentive for the public schools to find out why families are leaving and then try to make adjustments so families won't leave or maybe they will return.

Please vote in SUPPORT of all three of these expansion bills. Thank you.



February 23rd, 2022

Senate Committee on Education
Sen. Darling, Chair
State Capitol, Rm 122 S
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Senator Darling and members of the Committee:

The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 962, SB 963, SB 964, SB 965, SB 974. We are concerned will disproportionately impact students with disabilities.

SB 962 (Parental Rights)

Under the bill, all parents would be informed of any acts of violence or crimes occurring in schools, which could include students with disabilities. Many children with disabilities act out or exhibit behaviors to communicate. The bill does not clearly define what is considered an act of violence or crime. Advocates are concerned behaviors of students with disabilities will be reported to other parents and could lead to the student being more isolated or labeled as problematic. It is not clear how the bill would protect the disability status of students with disabilities, which is required under IDEA.

SB 963 (Reorganizing of Milwaukee's schools)

Under the bill, Milwaukee Public Schools would become four separate districts. 19.6% of Milwaukee's student body are students with disabilities. Currently, parents can choose a school located anywhere in the district that best fits their child's special education needs, even if it is outside their neighborhood. It's unclear what happens to students with disabilities after new district lines are drawn. Creating four separate districts will mean less choice for parents and may result in schools that have higher proportions of students with disabilities and less funding from a smaller local tax base.

SB 964 and SB 965 (Charter Schools and Charter School boards)

These bills would expand of charter schools. In Wisconsin, charter schools are public schools and must provide special education required under IDEA but often have limited resources available to students who chose these options. Charter schools in Wisconsin may have certain acceptance requirements that may make it difficult for students with disabilities to gain entry. Nationally, 9.5% charter school students have disabilities, while 14.2% of students in Wisconsin's traditional public schools have disabilities.

SB 974 (Choice Income Limits)

This bill eliminates income and enrollment limits for the school choice program in Wisconsin. Private schools are not required to provide supports and services to children with disabilities under IDEA and the ADA. Public schools are required to educate students with disabilities. Often, private schools are not able to meet the needs of children with disabilities, which results in higher proportions of students with



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disabilities in the local public schools, and funding shortfalls result from serving higher need and higher cost students.

BPDD is charged under the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act with advocacy, capacity building, and systems change to improve self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life for people with developmental disabilities¹.

Thank you for your consideration,

Beth Swedeen

Beth Swedeen, Executive Director,
Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

¹ More about BPDD https://wi-bpdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Legislative_Overview_BPDD.pdf.

**SENATOR ALBERTA DARLING
STATE OF WISCONSIN SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

Senate Bills 974, 964, 965, and 962

February 23, 2022

IN SUPPORT

My name is Kristin Franke and I am a resident of Ottawa, WI, wife and mother of three daughters. My youngest daughter attends a new charter school, Lake Country Classical Academy, in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. I am testifying in favor of Senate Bills 974, 964, 965, and 962.

Regarding SB974, I am in support because it is critical that parents maintain the rights pertaining to their child(ren)'s upbringing, education, religion, health care, and mental health and that measures are in place to prohibit the state from infringing on said rights. The State/Government's duty is to ensure the rights of its citizens, or those of the parents/guardians on behalf of its underage citizens, not make decisions regarding said citizens' upbringing, education, religion, health care, and mental health. Protecting the rights of parents is crucial and necessary in a free society and required to ensure good faith and trust of its citizens towards their government. There have been far too many cases of local school districts taking it upon themselves to override parental requests regarding invoking a gender reassignment protocol and new pronouns, promoting concepts and materials in schools that are inappropriate, and hiding acts of bullying, violence, and medical treatments that occur within the school from the parents. Even if these issues are few and far between, parents should still have access to all aspects of their minor children's lives without impediment. SB974 would be a great start to affirming parents' rights and implementing some safety measures against government interference and overreach in their children's lives.

Regarding SB964, I am in support because it is necessary to expand the ability to authorize independent charter schools in the state of Wisconsin. Wisconsin's charter authorization process is much more restrictive than many other states and has prevented families from the vast opportunities that charter schools can provide. Charter schools, like Lake Country Classical Academy (which already has a waitlist of over 250 families before the end of their first year), can provide families access to a quality of education that is usually only available at high-cost private schools. This enables more students the opportunity for an education that is not only excellent but is chosen because it is a good fit for the student and family. School choice allows families to enroll their students in schools where they want to be, for a variety of reasons, which not only increases diversity in the student population but creates a strong community because people want to be there and are invested in the outcome. They can provide a public education that caters to individual preference and need. Wisconsin citizens pay for the public educational services with our tax dollars and should have input on how that

money is used for the education of our children. We have the right to choose what school and education model is best for our kids and should not be expected to both pay taxes *and* exorbitant private school costs (that are simply not even feasible for the majority of citizens). So many families want this, as is evidenced by the waitlists for these charter schools.

Personally, I can attest that having the option to attend the new charter school, Lake Country Classical Academy in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, had been an absolute answer to prayer and a blessing for our family and hundreds others. Our family has pursued a classical education model since our 20-year-old became school age. Due to the lack of classical options locally and the high cost of the few private options available, we chose to homeschool our children, which was beautiful but required many sacrifices. With my older children off in high school and college, Lake Country Classical Academy has proven the best option for in-person schooling for our youngest daughter and has far exceeded all of our expectations in terms of the quality of the curriculum, the instructors, the administration, and community. In just a few short months, LCCA has already created an atmosphere that is rich, welcoming, and inculcates a love of that which is true, good, and beautiful in its students. This school is already enriching the lives of more than 400 students from several counties, with hundreds more lined up. This would not have been possible for all of these families without the public charter process, but because of numerous roadblocks in the existing WI charter authorization process, this school almost did not exist. That is why the WI charter authorization process needs to be expanded.

Regarding SB965, I am in support of the proposed modification because it will expand the ability to create more high quality authorized charters. If a charter school is performing at a high level, it follows that the process to open more of those high-performing schools should be simplified and expanded.

Regarding SB962, I am in support because it provides more avenues for school choice by removing income limits for parental choice and participation limits in the WPCP, thus increasing the number of eligible families, as well as providing an education expense reimbursement program that will allow more opportunities and educational options for families.

In closing, I am in support of Senate Bills 974, 964, 965, and 962 because they protect parents' rights regarding their children and allow for more high quality educational opportunities via charter schools and school choice. Thank you for considering this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristin Franke". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Kristin Franke
414-403-0902
kfranke@wi.rr.com