



SHAE SORTWELL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 2nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Hearing Testimony
Assembly Committee on Education
April 20, 2023
Assembly Bill 77

Chairman Kitchens and members of the Assembly Committee on Education – Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on AB 77, relating to pupil applications to attend a private school participating in a parental choice program.

Annual enrollment is often a pre-requisite that many parents opting to send their child to a private school do not always think about. Unfortunately, for my constituent, from whom you have received written testimony, and many other Wisconsin parents over the years, a missed deadline for re-enrolling their kids in the school choice program has meant their opportunity for a better education is limited or eliminated. And the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) does not allow any exceptions.

As a way to maintain a child's enrollment in Wisconsin's school choice system, this legislation allows (optional) private schools participating in a choice program to create an automatic application process for parents and legal guardians to opt in and use.

Additionally, the school-choice enrollment process can be a headache for private schools due to the amount of paperwork and reporting to DPI. This bill will cut down on the amount of time schools spend on those matters.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this legislation and would gladly answer any questions the committee may have.



RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

STATE SENATOR • 19TH SENATE DISTRICT

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Education

Senator Rachael Cabral-Guevara

April 20, 2023

Hello, Chairman Kitchens and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 77, an important piece of legislation that will help families and students attend the school of their choice.

Thousands of students across the state have opted to attend schools outside of public school systems. Enrollment in these choice schools has grown dramatically over the last decade. This has created an increasing demand for education options and with it the need for a smooth application process.

Currently, public schools have an automatic enrollment process which permits students within the district to attend their schools if they so choose. With there being no application necessary, many parents have found it extremely helpful not to worry about dates or deadlines with the public school systems. Choice schools do require such an application, and that has led to many families missing out on the education they sought for their kids.

This bill intends to change that story. For too many parents, missing application deadlines for choice school enrollment has meant that—in some cases—their kids were forced to attend struggling schools where their educational growth may be stunted. By allowing these parents to opt in to an automatic application, they no longer need to worry about risking their child's education all because of missed dates. Conversely, their kids do not risk having to switch schools for a year, losing out on time with friends, mentors, and teachers.

These kids should not be forced back and forth between schools and differing education standards due to arbitrary deadlines we do not require of public schools. I am hopeful you are able to support this piece of legislation which will provide some peace of mind for parents and their children alike by removing that barrier. Thank you again for your time.

**Assembly Committee on Education
Hearing on Assembly Bill 77
April 20, 2023**

Good Morning Chairman Kitchens, Representatives:

My name is Amy Loudeneck and I am the Director of Policy and Government Affairs for School Choice Wisconsin.

First of all, I want to thank Representative Shae Sortwell and Senator Rachel Cabral-Guevara for authoring Assembly Bill 77 and shining a light on a problem that is very real for the more than 52,000 students and 373 schools we support.

School Choice Wisconsin isn't a think tank and we do a lot more than lobbying. We have a full team of people in West Allis who support schools in the choice program. We help with compliance, onboarding, professional development, and *enrollment*.

The enrollment application period is a very, very busy time for SCW and for schools. Perhaps you didn't know, but the final deadline for enrollment in the statewide Wisconsin Parental Choice Program is today - April 20. And all students must reapply every single year. If a currently enrolled student misses the deadline, that student loses their seat and their scholarship. Period. No exceptions.

It happens more often than you might think, and the stories are heartbreaking. Committee members should have received written testimony submitted by several choice schools. We do have one school here to testify in person. As you can imagine, most schools and our team at SCW are spending the day making sure parents meet tonight's 11:59 pm deadline, so tens of thousands of kids can return to their school next fall.

School choice is about allowing parents to choose a school that is best for their child regardless of their income or zip code. Requiring a tedious reapplication process every year puts bureaucracy ahead of families and puts red tape ahead of quality academic instruction and student achievement.

SCW, the schools we support, and our many allies applaud the authors' willingness to offer solutions to improve the enrollment system, particularly for continuing students who have not moved.

We understand the DPI is opposed to the bill and has indicated the earliest an automatic reenrollment process could be implemented is 2025-2026. That means even if this bill were to pass in its current form, the problem would remain for another two years.

School Choice Wisconsin would like to see something implemented more quickly, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide additional perspective to help inform the committee's decision-making process as you contemplate other ways to potentially resolve the most pressing

issues associated with the cumbersome reenrollment process.

Our schools and families *and* the Department of Public Instruction spend an inordinate amount of time and resources to comply with multiple aspects of the reapplication process. The online portal has *thirty-seven* different screens to navigate. Current rules require *paper documentation that is not less than three months old to be submitted to the school, in person, for ALL applications, including continuing students.*

If automatic re-enrollment isn't an option, perhaps allowing a parent of a currently enrolled student to check a box online saying they haven't moved and allowing the DPI to run an electronic address verification on a state-supported data exchange that likely *already exists* would be satisfactory. The current rules are archaic and unnecessary. A lot of state programs allow electronic verification to determine eligibility. In fact, some programs are federally required to utilize this type of technology to reduce the administrative burden on the agency. Another idea that would be welcomed by schools and families and would certainly help prevent kids from inadvertently losing their scholarship, their school, their friends, their teachers and all the stability those relationships provide, is to add an August enrollment period for the statewide Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP), as allowed in the choice programs in Milwaukee and Racine.

I hope the committee will strongly consider supporting the spirit of the proposal before you and keep an open mind when reviewing any potential amendments to Assembly Bill 77. If SCW or I can be a resource to you or your constituents, we stand ready to assist.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer questions.



Assembly Committee on Education
April 20, 2023

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony
2023 Assembly Bill 77 – Private School Parental Choice Automatic Reapplication**

I want to thank Chairman Kitchens and members of the committee for the opportunity to present testimony on 2023 Assembly Bill 77 (AB 77). My name is Chanell Crawford, and I am the Director of the Parental Education Options Team at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). DPI opposes AB 77 because it could cause confusion for families resulting in different reasons why students would be ineligible for the program. It will also create new and time-consuming work for both schools and DPI.

Under this bill, a private school participating in the Wisconsin, Milwaukee, or Racine choice program may allow parents to use an automatic reapplication process until: (1) the student's parent submits a notice to the private school indicating that the student will not attend the private school under the choice program in the following school year; or (2) until the student is enrolled in the highest grade offered by the private school. Under the bill, if a school allows for automatic reapplication, the parent can opt to use the process or not.

Currently, parents are required to annually apply for the Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and Racine choice programs. Parents use the Online Parent Application system to apply for the choice programs. Schools use the choice program Online Application System (OAS) to process student applications. The DPI maintains resources that include information about how schools can determine whether applications have been submitted for returning students. Based on that information, schools may reach out to remind parents to apply who have not submitted an application. In addition, the DPI sends schools a reminder at the beginning of all application periods for the choice programs and prior to the end of the Wisconsin application period that parents must apply each year, that schools can determine if returning students have applied, and that schools may follow up with parents who have not yet applied.

The DPI recommends a systematic review of the three choice programs' application processes and any potential changes to those, along with input from stakeholder groups and schools, to more holistically address both the concern spurring this bill (families missing application periods) along with other areas identified where improvements may be made to benefit schools and families. As noted below, this bill could create more confusion for parents resulting in an increased number of applicants missing the application periods or forgetting to submit required residency documentation, which would impact eligibility. In addition, this bill will create significant additional work for schools and the DPI. Current processes exist to help schools reach out to families that have not reapplied.

- **Opting in or out of Reapplication Process:** Under this bill, both schools and families can opt in or out of using the automatic reapplication process by student, which may result in added confusion. For example, there could be confusion among parents regarding which

schools a parent may need to apply for their students each year and which schools the student has an automatic application. Parents with students continuing in the choice program that have automated applications will need to apply for their new students. Parents of current 8th grade students will need to remember to apply for the student for 9th grade, after not applying for years, because students may attend a different school for high school. Many families have students at different schools (elementary versus high), and these families will need to remember which students they need to apply for each year depending if the schools their students attend allow for automatic applications. This could result in more students missing the application windows.

- **Annual Residency Requirements:** Residency is an annual eligibility requirement for the Choice programs and needed for funding purposes for each Choice program. All students will have to continue to provide a residency document annually, regardless if they have an automatic application. Even with automatic reapplication, schools will need to work with parents to collect new addresses or confirm the student resides at the same address because the school will no longer receive the student's current address due to the automatic reapplication. Schools will also need to verify that parents are applying to the correct program based on their current address. These new steps for schools and parents could lead to confusion and result in many students not having eligible applications for the choice program.
- **New Administrative Requirements for Schools:** This bill creates new significant administrative functions for schools participating in the choice program(s). Schools will need to reach out to applicants to determine which students have moved and then update new address information for students into OAS. Currently, this is completed as part of the online annual application process. In addition, when supporting families, schools will also have new challenges, as they will no longer be able to provide the consistent guidance that all students must apply every year because not all applicants will necessarily opt-in to the process.
- **Administration Costs:** In order to implement this bill, the Department will have to redesign both choice program systems (the Online Parent Application and OAS). To support the increased initial and ongoing workload associated with an automated application process, the DPI estimates the need for at least two additional DPI staff positions (a consultant and programmer).
- **Effective Date:** This bill does not have a delayed effective date or initial applicability date, which means that if the bill were signed into law, it would go into effect the day after it is published (typically, one day after enactment). Given the time needed to redesign the choice program systems and create update resources for schools and families, the earliest the automatic reapplication process could begin is the 2025-26 school year. Applicants would indicate, when they apply to the Private School Choice Programs for the 2024-25 school year if they would like to opt in or out of the process beginning in the 2025-26 school year.

For the reasons stated above, DPI opposes AB 77. We welcome the opportunity to discuss changes to the bill. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison, at Kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 264-6716.



3399 Division Road • Jackson, WI 53037-9707
Phone: 262-677-4051 • Fax: 262-677-4290
www.kmlhs.org

April 20, 2023

Dear Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

The Wisconsin and Milwaukee Parental Choice Programs are a blessing to our families as they have been able to choose the school that best fits their needs and values. Unfortunately, parents must follow many rules to be a part of the program that far exceed their public school counterparts. One of these challenges is the re-enrollment process on an annual basis. We have had individual families who have lost their voucher due to the challenges of gathering paperwork and remembering to re-enroll in April. This challenge also forces our school to spend our already limited resources on staffing to communicate and track down every family with a voucher to remind them and assist them in the re-enrollment process. That is money that can't be spent on what really matters - educating our children!

For the sake of our families and students and to prevent them from having to change schools in the middle of their high school career, please move to an auto enrollment system. This will allow these children and families to be treated in a similar manner to the way that public schools have been able to operate for years.

Thank you for your consideration.

My Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamie C. Luehring", written over the typed name.

Dr. Jamie C. Luehring
President

cc: Katie Bender-Olson, Legislative Council Clerk

Educating for Life and for Eternity



April 19, 2023

Dear Chairman Kitchens and members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

As the Choice Administrator for Seton Catholic Schools, which is comprised of twelve schools, I fully support Bill AB77 that would allow for automatic re-enrollment of continuing Private School Choice Program students. Each year, we have examples of returning students who are eligible to continue in the program and yet lose their voucher due to missing an application deadline.

Our schools, are a family of 12 K-8 parish Catholic schools in Greater Milwaukee, educating 3,000 students, with 80% of students economically disadvantaged and 85% students of color. We invest significantly in academic development of our students and have Six 5-star schools as rated by DPI's report cards, and our average student academic growth was 132% in Math and 128% in English Language Arts last year.

There are multiple examples of Private School Choice Applications that were determined ineligible due to the re-enrollment process and thus have caused multiple students to have their education disrupted by losing their seats in their current school.

For Example:

- Changing of the street name example; "Old World Third Street" now "Dr. Martin Luther King Drive."
 - DPI requires the proof of residency document to show the new street name. The first year after the change, DPI accepted a letter from the City of Milwaukee stating the change in street name. Now that it has been over a year since the change, families are required to have their proof of residency document list "Dr. Martin Luther King Drive" as the street name. Getting the street named changed on utility bills or other documentation can be a difficult and time-consuming endeavor for parents who are not native English speakers and are not comfortable using technology. The time it takes for them to accomplish this causes them to miss application deadlines.

Application and correction windows examples;

- Application periods for applications submitted after the 15th of each month. (only a 5-day window) difficult to obtain the residency documentation before the end of the open application period.
- Parents not submitting acceptable documents within the allowed correction window thus missing the deadline.



- The dates on the document provided by the parent fall outside the DPI designated 3-month window.
- Returning students were waitlisted because they did not complete the application during the first open application period and the class filled up with the addition of new students.

Residency documentation examples;

Some parents do not submit the residency documentation immediately after completing the online application. Oftentimes parents provide different documents for residency proof each year and the new documents may not meet DPI requirements. This causes the deadline to be missed in many cases because the first item submitted is not acceptable and needs to be corrected. Causes of this include:

- Parent name that did not match the proof of residency.
- Misspelled or multiple last names.
- Abbreviations or hyphens in names - some official documents have the students name hyphenated while others do not. Ex. a birth certificate may not have the last name hyphenated, while the baptismal certificate may have it that way.
- Street directions (North, South, etc.) do not match or are missing.
- City (the document has county and not the city) does not match.
- Partial or illegible documentation provided (parent takes a picture and sends a portion of or a blurry picture of the document).
- Unacceptable forms of proof of residency documentation submitted.

Municipal address example;

- A family participating in the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program must go to City Hall each year to get a letter stating that their address appears on documentation to be in Milwaukee; however, the residence is in Franklin. The mailing address city is not the city in which the family resides. They have a Milwaukee mailing address, because of the post office parameters for handling mail, but the home is in Franklin and the family pays property taxes to the City of Franklin.

This is a time-consuming task that is the cause of unnecessary time spent for a family. And it often takes multiple attempts to get the correction documents required by DPI. For many of our families English is their second language and they are not comfortable with technology. This causes a major delay in the process of getting students accepted into the Choice Program and results in a disruption to the student's education.



In addition to the burden this places on families, on average, our twelve schools estimate that their staff would save 400-500 hours during every school year if continuing Private School Choice Program students are automatically re-enrolled.

Bill AB 77 would provide a major reduction in work for school staff as well as that of parents. The passing of the bill allows schools to focus their resources on the important work that more directly benefits our students.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie Leung".

Julie Leung

Seton Director of Regulatory Affairs, Compliance, and Systems

Cc: Katie Bender-Olson, Legislative Council Clerk

◆ *Life Happens: A ChoiceWords series* ◆

This is the third installment in a periodic ChoiceWords series. This time we stop in Osceola, Polk County.

Out in the cold in Osceola: Families bounced from the choice program

In yet another case (see [here](#) and [here](#)) of overreaching and overly rigid bureaucracy hurting Wisconsin families, School Choice Wisconsin recently learned of two families in Osceola who were left out of the choice program for this school year. The families had kids attending Valley Christian School for years. Those kids are now torn from their school, their friends and the life they were building.

David Richter had four kids at the school who had started there four years ago after a tragedy in the family, the death of their mother. One of David's kids remains at Valley Christian; the others were bounced out after Richter missed filling out the application. "It just slipped by," he said.

Valley Christian had provided stability and community for the family. "There's a bond, a fellowship, a camaraderie here that's a blessing," says Richter. The kids are now with online charter school iForward. Rushing to get onboard with that program was a major upheaval for the family, says Richter.

Choice Wisconsin President Nic Kelly recently traveled to Osceola, a picturesque town north of the Twin Cities, to talk with Richter and another parent left out in the cold, Candice Lund.

'Uprooted everything'

Lund's daughter is now at a public school after being at Valley Christian from pre-K through part of the first semester of sixth grade. Lund was notified in November that her daughter was out of choice. Lund called the DPI to find out why. "They said that we they did not have any proof of us visiting their website and clicking the box," of the application, said Lund.

Lund had to make some tough choices and move her daughter mid-year to public school. "She is not exactly thriving there," Lund said.

“I made the choice to put her here and give her an opportunity to get a better education, a little bit more one-on-one,” Lund said of her original choice to put her at Valley Christian. “My daughter also thrives with the religious aspect of the school and becoming a Christian. This was an environment that worked for her.”

Because her daughter has a longer day at the public school, Lund has had to look for different employment. The change has “uprooted everything,” says Lund. She is also facing a bill of over \$2,000 for the portion of the year her daughter was at Valley Christian.

Another barrier to choice is the grade-level entry points in the WPCP. To get back into WPCP, a student must fit into one of the following categories: a public school student in grades K4–12; a student who was not enrolled in school the previous year including attending a homeschool; a private school student in grades K4, K5, 1, 9; and a student who participated in the MPCP or RPCP the previous school year.

So if Lund wanted to enroll her daughter in choice next year, she cannot attend Valley Christian this year. The options were homeschool or public school.

Richter’s family will return to Valley Christian, he says, but because of the grade-point entry regulations, he will also need to enroll his kids in a public school for a time. “We can then check in the box that they’re enrolled in public school.”

Richter said his family had not relied on publicly funded education before this. “We’re taxpayers,” says Richter, who has kids ranging from age 24 to fourth grade. “This is what we get when we want to try and be a little part of the system.” The state needs to “make it not so tough,” to enroll in choice, he says.

No rolling horizon

And indeed it is tough for schools and parents to manage the overreaching enrollment requirements the state imposes on choice.

Parents are required to enroll their kids in the choice program every year; there is no rolling horizon. If you miss a deadline, tough. Your kid is out despite any number of years your child has been in the program.

In addition to the burden of yearly re-enrollment, the state Department of Public Instruction maintains hardline paperwork requirements, which include unreasonable “perfection” and uniformity standards for addresses, proof of residency, names, and other information (see press release on the “perfection” rules). The WPCP also carries an inflexible, single spring deadline for parents to apply — April 21, 2022, for the current school year — which many see as too early.

All this creates an extremely stressful application process for schools and parents, totally unlike the ease of enrolling at a public school. At a public school, a typo does not threaten enrollment. At a public school, if you don’t apply by April 21, you still get in. In fact, you can stroll into a public school any time of year and enroll.

‘Hurting the kids’

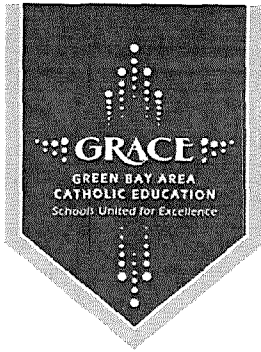
Back in Osceola, the impact on the school of losing these families is “monumental,” says Ron Brace, Valley Christian administrator. The school has lost thousands in revenue and valued members of their community. It’s a close community; the school has 105 students. More than half are choice.

Going forward, Brace would like to see the state drop the yearly enrollment requirement. “You as a parent would only have to respond or react if you do not want to be part of the program anymore, as opposed to having to continually be proactive in renewing again,” he said.

“The biggest thing is that it’s hurting is the kids,” says Lund. “Who knows what effect this is going to have long term on my daughter and all the other people that have been affected out there in the state of Wisconsin,” she said.

Check back on our website for updates on the perfection lawsuits and other aspects of choice. If you have a story to tell, email reardon@parentchoice.org. We’d love to hear from you.

— School Choice Wisconsin



WE ARE:
GRACE.

To: Chairman Joel Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

From: Kimberly Desotell, President, Green Bay Area Catholic Education (GRACE)

Date: April 17, 2023

Re: Support for Assembly Bill AB77

Dear Assembly Committee on Education:

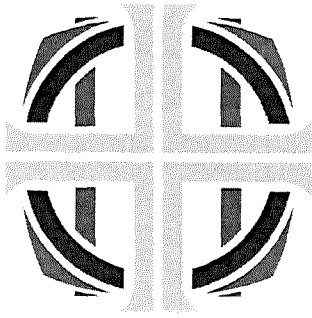
This letter of support references 2023 Assembly Bill 77 (AB77) which would give participating parents and guardians the option to automatically apply in the Parental Choice Program without the necessity to complete the annual application process in order to attend the private school under the Choice program in subsequent school years.

The current practices and protocols create family hardship and additional requirements to file paperwork to re-apply annually. This bill allows parents to 'opt into' automatic re-application to remain in the program until the student completes the highest grade offered by the school. These changes are congruent with what occurs naturally in every public school throughout our fine state.

In the Green Bay area, the GRACE system includes 9 schools, each of which serves Parental Choice students. These students – and their families – are an important part of our school community, both academically and socially. We support Assembly Bill 77 because it will increase stability and predictability for these important students and their families ensuring their opportunity to continue their school enrollment of choice in an uninterrupted manner.

Thank you sincerely for your consideration of our testimony in support of this important Assembly Bill.

Kimberly A. Desotell
President, GRACE



THE LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
OF GREATER MILWAUKEE

10427 W. Lincoln Ave. #1300 · West Allis, Wisconsin · 53227
(414) 421-9100 · Fax (414) 421-9120
www.WeTeachTruth.org

Mrs. Christine Oldenburg
10427 W. Lincoln Ave. #1300
West Allis, WI 53227
April 17th, 2023

Subject: AB77

Dear Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

I am writing to support AB77. As the Director of Admissions for The Lutheran High School Association of Greater Milwaukee, we operate 4 schools that participate in the Parental Choice Programs, serving 1,630 choice students in the 2022-23 school year. Supporting the bill AB77 would better give students continuity and security in their school enrollment. Additionally, it would save school resources that can be better used in supporting students' education.

1. Two of our schools have waiting lists for students that participate in the Parental Choice Programs. So, if a continuing family does not complete their choice paperwork and verification information in February, oftentimes, a transfer student will take their choice seat. This causes a disruption in a student's education if they are forced to transfer schools because another student took their seat. We saw a record number of continuing students (close to 125) that were bumped out of their choice seat this year in applying for the 2023-24 school year because they did not get their information submitted in time.
2. Our schools communicate 5 times or more to the 1,000+ continuing families just in the month of February, indicating the need for them to re-enroll. Additionally, we must process and re-verify 1,000+ student applications each year. These resources could be reallocated to better invest in the students' education.
3. Public schools do not require residency verification for continuing students. So, many of our families assume they do not need to re-enroll and thus miss the deadlines, and their student loses their seat.

I ask for your support of the automatic re-enrollment in the Parental Choice programs, as indicated in AB77. Thank you for the work you do for our students and schools!

Sincerely,

Christine Oldenburg
414-296-5962
coldenburg@lhsagm.org

From: DPI Private School Choice <PrivateSchoolChoice@dpi.wi.gov>
Date: November 29, 2022 at 12:08:25 PM CST
To: candice lund <ck.Lund@yahoo.com>
Subject: RE: URGENT***School Choice-maddilynn Lund-urgent

Good Morning Candice,

Based on the deadline in state law, the WPCP application period is closed for the 2022-23 school year, and there are no exceptions that can be made to this deadline. We discussed other options over the phone previously. If you would like to have another discussion please feel free to call the number below.

Ryne Franz
Consultant – Private School Choice Program
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Phone: (888)245-2732 x3
DPI.PrivateSchoolChoice@dpi.wi.gov
<http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice-programs>

DISCLAIMER: The content of this email is for informational purposes only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice. You should contact your attorney to obtain legal advice, including compliance with state and federal laws and regulations.

-----Original Message-----

From: candice lund <ck.lund@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, November 21, 2022 6:38 AM
To: DPI Private School Choice <PrivateSchoolChoice@dpi.wi.gov>
Subject: URGENT***School Choice-maddilynn Lund-urgent

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning DPI, Ryne(*) or whom it may concern; My name is Candice Lund. I spoke to someone at DPI(I believe it was Ryne(*)November 1st. I'm sorry that I am just getting back to you. I wanted to have all the information I could gather/verify. I will try and keep to the facts, but can provide further details if needed.

On November 1st I was notified by Valley Christian School(VCS). It appears that after a state audit it was found that my daughter Maddilynn Marie Lund was no longer on the School Choice Voucher Program. How could this be? I specifically recall getting an email from the school, clicking the link (at some point) and selecting her attending Valley Christian. I know for certain on March 17 at our annual school re-enrollment. I selected payment method as being: the voucher program. I also recall bringing a W-2 to the school, to copy for verification.

Moving forward from the school's call. I called DPI and talked to a gentleman. He did a search on my email: ck.lund@yahoo.com . He stated that he had nothing from me. Like I stated above: recall clicking

link and selecting VCS, I would not have selected voucher payment on re-enrollment form, or provided proof with W2 to school without first doing the DPI site. I asked him to search again. He stated he could not confirm anything on his end through my email. Not familiar with how things work on his end. I do not know what proof he may or may not have. He then began to go over options for me. If I'm understanding correctly.

Option #1: show attempt that I tried to select and confirm VCS for the year. Could potentially lead to have Maddi be reconsidered/reinstated for the voucher program.

Option #2: to homeschool for a year and reapply

#2 to my understanding is -I would have to wait an entire year-then apply which at this point brings me to apply in the spring of 2024-placement back at VCS fall of 2024 pending acceptance.

Option #3: place Maddi in a public online school. Option #4: enroll her in a public school.

#3&4- if counted in the system as public would allow me to reapply for the voucher program when it opened in spring of 2023, and with criteria met/acceptance place her back at VCS in the fall of 2023 on the voucher program.

Option#5: continue to keep her at VCS and pay the tuition each year till eligible to enroll in voucher program in ninth grade. She is in sixth grade now. That would leave me with great debt. Even if I could get scholarships to pay for portions of it.

Going with option #1: Not realizing how exactly the law is written and interpreted at DPI. Asking to have everything I'm submitting, considered as a whole.

Our facts/story

I started to do some digging. As I mainly do email from my phone. I began there. Not having an office job. Emails get checked about once a week -never more than two weeks. I began to check my email searching all kinds of words, dpi voucher program school choice, WPCP, Wisconsin, parental choice program, etc. There was not much that came up for this year. I did find one from VCS office on to 2/7/22 about open enrollment. It included the link that I used(believe I used)to access the DPI site. I will forward email -marking it email#1. I cannot find anything else from DPI for 2022. I next turned to my phone history but was unable to search any kind of prior history having gotten a new phone this fall. I next continued to check other devices at my house, two computers and a tablet finding nothing. Moving to what I knew I could find. I asked VCS for a copy of the electronic filing of the financial statement that was filled out on March 17th 2022. VCS sent it to me in an email this week. (Email#2 sending to you). I was also able to get a copy of the W-2 I submitted to the school.(Email #3).

Assuming I had done everything needed for Maddi to continue on the voucher program.

I assumed everything was in place for the 2022 school year. Not realizing I had not received the standard confirmation email from DPI. Till looking back through emails(after Nov. 1st). On the same note I could not find anything in the junk, trash, inbox from either DPI or VCS stating my daughter was no longer on the program either.

I did receive an email from VCS about forms needed for school on 8/2/22. (email #4). It did not include anything about voucher program or paying for tuition.

Nothing was said prior to the start of school or our meet the teacher night 8/18/2022 or by the start of school on 8/22/2023. I assumed it was just another normal school year. The first quarter ended nothing was said or sent. thinking that everything was all still good. Until our life changed on November 1 with notification from the school. Our whole world turned upside down! Not only was she no longer on the program. Her friends, teachers and daily routine was about to turn upside down. I am now looking at an unexpected bill of over \$2000 which I am not prepared to pay in full, and would need to make payments. Due to the timing of DPI and VCS notification it limited time and availability to some choices DPI mentioned. Leaving me not much of an option but to place my daughter in public school. Just to jump through hoops to try and get her back to VCS all because the way the laws are written or interpreted, seem unfair and unjust, especially to the kids. As initially she was supposed to be on the voucher program until 9th grade. I shouldn't have had to make a major decision till then. With no confirmation in the email search. I am now starting to second-guess myself(did I visit the site?) My gut still says I clicked boxes and jumped through the hoops I was required to. Would she be denied public school for not having a box checked? What if I was able to borrow money or get scholarships for the year and apply in the spring like I did her first year-why is this year different?

Trying to keep this upheaval from happening to others is another reason I am writing you. We have had four different administrators at VCS since 2016 when we first enrolled. Realizing some checks and balances may have gotten lost along the way. I have been discussing with VCS about implementing changes in this area. In doing so I discovered we were not the only family affected. It appears that there were three families affected. one family having more than one child attending VCS. VCS is a small school of approximately 120 students 80 families. This nightmare is like a lottery we would NEVER want to win.

I would like to ask DPI three things.

#1-Please consider everything I submitted as proof of an attempt to apply and possibly reinstate my daughter Maddilynn on the voucher program. Or submit proof to me that I did not check the box or submit-seeing(*)as there are three family's-could it be a computer glitch?

#2-Please help all of us effected throughout the state/system, advocate for changes of uniformly throughout the Racine, Milwaukee and school choice systems.

#3-Help end such a delayed response from DPI-help create some kind of communication as well as some kind of check and balance on your end, prior to school starting in August-instead of October or later. Through today's technology- it shouldn't be too hard. Letting us know if we have checked the boxes needed or someone was about to be removed from voucher program -like other state systems, food stamps, medical, etc. .

I would like to close with the fact that I made a conscious choice to place my daughter at VCS-in a place where she could grow and thrive in a Christian atmosphere. I made job, family and life choices based on her placement there. Praying this path would lead to her being able to break cycles. Going so far as to borrow \$4000 to pay for her first year. Being fortunate enough to be placed on the voucher system the following year 2017.(why can't this be done now?) This was to take her through the 9th grade. She was thriving. She was even moved ahead a grade level. Even being ahead a grade she was receiving all A's. Thriving as a creative, critical thinking, independent student, friend, mentor, and sports team player in a welcoming Christian environment. Will this all end?

Her date for entering public school will be Nov.28th. A school with more than 10times the students she is used to at VCS. Relearning new math techniques. Having to make a change at a difficult age-middle school. Switching from writing on paper to I pads. She is very anxious, stressed, nervous which I believe any kid would be. I believe due to this we have had several behavior issues since Nov. 1st. I realize change is hard for most. How is this going to affect her and the other innocent kids this is happening ?

Praying for all the innocent children effected by such change. As I am sure this is not their choice or their parents. I will be coping one of the other families and our school administrator on this email. I will also be contacting legislations asking for their help as well.

PLEASE HELP ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE!!

Thank you for your time in this matter. I hope to hear from you soon.

Candice Kay Lund

ck.lund@yahoo.com

Sent from my iPhone



SHEBOYGAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Scholarship · Discipleship · Citizenship

Chairman Kitchens and members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

Firstly, thank you for your hard work to make education in Wisconsin better for all involved. You typically hold "thankless" positions, and I'd like to rectify that: Thank you!

I represent Sheboygan Christian School in Sheboygan, WI. We are a P-12 Christian school that participates in the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP).

We project that next year's enrollment will include at least 211 students participating in the WPCP. This is in addition to 281 traditional/tuition-paying students. The WPCP has been transformational in the lives of many of our students, granting them access to an education that aligns with their family's values, and a partnership that allows parental involvement- both key indicators of student academic success!

There's at least one current sticking point with the WPCP- the fact that families need to verify themselves every year to their school. Education represents a partnership between the parent and the school. For schools like Sheboygan Christian School, this partnership means that we are committing to educating their child until he or she graduates from high school (or until the family determines that we are no longer their choice for education). And unfortunately, even though the vast majority of WPCP students return to SCS year in and year out, there's this annoying chore of annually verifying your home address with your school. While this may seem like a small ask, today's families are incredibly busy and are increasingly looking for "set it and forget it" lives.

Simply put, our WPCP families call Sheboygan Christian School "my school." They have no intention of disenrolling from our school... and in the rare cases that they do, they tell us. Parents with children enrolled in public schools don't have to go through a laborious annual re-enrollment process, and in the spirit of fairness, neither should our WPCP families.

Thank you for your support of bill AB77, the "Auto re-enrollment Bill." When passed, this bill would better represent the spirit of school choice, make school choice students and parents lives' easier, and help participant schools more effectively work and prepare to educate our great state's next generation.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you to answer any questions that you might have about what the "front lines" of working in the WPCP is like. My enrollment team spends countless hours annually trying to track down required information for our WPCP students every year!

Sincerely,

Rudi Gesch
Director of Marketing & Enrollment

929 Greenfield Avenue | Sheboygan, WI 53081 | 920.458.9981 | www.sheboyganchristian.com

In partnership with the Christian community, Sheboygan Christian School uses a biblical perspective to integrate academic excellence with Christ-centered learning, preparing students' hearts and minds for service in God's world.

RONCALLI

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

April 14, 2023

Rep. Kitchens,

My entire team supports the improvements to the Wisconsin Parental Choice programs that AB77 would implement. In addition, we prefer that a student's enrollment in the program be continuous until the parent expressly withdraws the student from the program for the following year or the student completes the highest grade offered by his/her current school.

Parents routinely misunderstand the requirement to reapply each year. Our public schools do not require an annual application for each student. We commit significant employee hours trying to communicate the importance of REAPPLYING EVERY YEAR AND PROVIDING THE SAME RESIDENCY DOCUMENTATION AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS.

Countless hours are then spent by our staff verifying the acceptability of the thousands of documents we receive. We must ensure that each applicant's address is essentially an exact match between application, residency document, and school district records. The slightest variations are deemed unacceptable by the DPI and could disqualify a student who has previously established eligibility based on all the legal criteria.

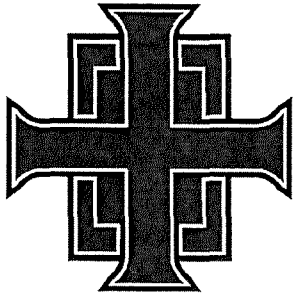
Every year we have students whose participation in this valuable educational opportunity is jeopardized by the annual application requirement. Many of these parents have limited access to computers to complete the online application, are among those least likely to be able to provide adequate residency proof and are living in economically and socially perilous circumstances. The burden placed on them year after year is sometimes more than they can carry.

The reasonable amendments to the program proposed in AB77 would simplify the process for parents and schools. But, ultimately, it's about the children. Continuity in their schooling strengthens the underpinnings for academic and life-long success. Let's always remember that these children are not "applicants" or "voucher recipients" or "private school enrollees." They are our future.

Barbara Strawn

Director of Finance and School Choice Administrator

2000 Mirro Drive
Manitowoc WI 54220-6799
920-682-8801
www.roncallicatholicschools.org



MILWAUKEE LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL

9700 West Grantosa Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53222 (414) 461-6000
www.MilwaukeeLutheran.org www.WeTeachTruth.org

Mrs. Rachel Janousky
9700 W. Grantosa Dr.
Milwaukee, WI 53222
April 17th, 2023

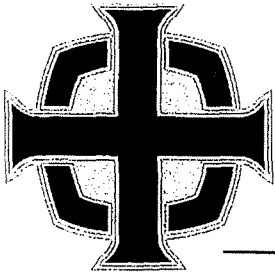
Subject: AB77

Dear Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Education,
I am writing to support AB77. As the Director of Admissions for Milwaukee Lutheran High School, we participate in the Parental Choice Program, serving over 800+ choice students in the 2022-23 school year. Supporting the bill AB77 would better give students continuity and security in their school enrollment. Additionally, it would save school resources that can be better used in supporting students' education.

1. Milwaukee Lutheran has a waiting list for students that participate in the Parental Choice Programs. So, if a continuing family does not complete their choice paperwork and verification information in February, oftentimes, a transfer student will take their choice seat. This causes a disruption in a student's education if they are forced to transfer schools because another student took their seat. We saw a record number of continuing students (close to 125) that were bumped out of their choice seat this year in applying for the 2023-24 school year because they did not get their information submitted in time.
2. Our schools communicate 5 times or more to the 800+ continuing families just in the month of February, indicating the need for them to re-enroll. Additionally, we must process and re-verify 800+ student applications each year. These resources could be reallocated to better invest in the students' education.
3. Public schools do not require residency verification for continuing students. So, many of our families assume they do not need to re-enroll and thus miss the deadlines, and their student loses their seat.

I ask for your support of the automatic re-enrollment in the Parental Choice programs, as indicated in AB77 proposed by School Choice Wisconsin. Thank you for the work you do for our students and schools!

Sincerely,
Rachel Janousky
414-461-6000 ext. 280
rjanousky@milwaukeeelutheran.org



MARTIN LUTHER HIGH SCHOOL

5201 South 76th Street
Greendale, WI 53129
414.421.4000
Fax: 414.421.4071
www.MartinLutherHS.org

Ms. Abbie Amling
5201 S. 76th Street
Greendale, WI 53129
April 17th, 2023

Subject: AB77

Dear Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

I am writing to support AB77. As the Director of Enrollment Management for Martin Luther High School, we serve 518 choice students. Martin Luther is part of The Lutheran High School Association of Greater Milwaukee, operating 4 schools that Participate in multiple Parental Choice Programs, serving 1,630 choice students in the 2022-2023 school year. Supporting the bill AB77 would better give students continuity and security in their school enrollment. Additionally, it would save school resources that can be better used in supporting students' education.

1. Two of our schools have waiting lists for students that participate in the Parental Choice Programs. So, if a continuing family does not complete their choice paperwork and verification information in February, oftentimes, a transfer student will take their choice seat. This causes a disruption in a student's education if they are forced to transfer schools because another student took their seat. We saw a record number of continuing students (close to 125) that were bumped out of their choice seat this year in applying for the 2023-24 school year because they did not get their information submitted in time.
2. Our schools communicate 5 times or more to the 1,000+ continuing families just in the month of February, indicating the need for them to re-enroll. Additionally, we must process and re-verify 1,000+ student applications each year. These resources could be reallocated to better invest in the students' education.
3. Public schools do not require residency verification for continuing students. So, many of our families assume they do not need to re-enroll and thus miss the deadlines, and their student loses their seat.

I ask for your support of the automatic re-enrollment in the Parental Choice programs, as indicated in AB77. Thank you for the work you do for our students and schools!

Sincerely,

Abbie Amling
414.421.4000 ext. 180
aamling@martinlutherhs.org

April 20, 2023

Scott W. Cole
Crystal L. Cole
314 Dakota Ct.
Mishicot WI, 54228

Committee on Education
Assembly Bill 77

To the Committee on Education,

We are writing to express our support for Assembly Bill 77. After attending informational meetings on the Wisconsin Choice Program, we successfully qualified our daughter for a voucher for her Kindergarten year of school. We misunderstood the program, and did not apply for a voucher for her 1st grade. We thought once she was qualified for the voucher, it would stay with her through her completion of 8th grade. Therefore, we lost our voucher. We chose not to uproot our daughter from her current learning program at her school in order to try and requalify her. We felt like it would be an unnecessary traumatic experience for our young daughter who already struggles with social anxiety and change. We strongly support this bill that would allow qualified applicants to be automatically enrolled for subsequent years.

We contacted the office of State Representative Shae Sortwell and were informed this has happened to numerous people. We would like to help those in the future avoid confusion and frustration with the current program structure.

Sincerely,

Scott and Crystal Cole

From: Pfaffenbach, Zach
Sent: Monday, August 29, 2022 9:44 AM
To: Knepp, Fern
Subject: Bill Draft Request

Hi Fern,

Per our last conversation, could you draft a bill for us that creates some flexibility with the school-choice enrollment deadline? We would like the bill to be set up where the parents signing up have two options for future enrollment: they can either re-enroll the following year (maybe they need to re-evaluate their situation with the kid(s)) or they can opt-in "permanently" so they do not risk forgetting to re-enroll like my constituent did.

Thanks!

Zach Pfaffenbach

Policy Advisor | Committee Clerk
Rep. Shae Sortwell – 2nd Assembly District
Room 316 North, State Capitol | 608-266-9870
Zach.Pfaffenbach@legis.wisconsin.gov

April 20, 2023

Scott W. Cole
Crystal L. Cole
314 Dakota Ct.
Mishicot WI, 54228

Committee on Education
Assembly Bill 77

To the Committee on Education,

We are writing to express our support for Assembly Bill 77. After attending informational meetings on the Wisconsin Choice Program, we successfully qualified our daughter for a voucher for her Kindergarten year of school. We misunderstood the program, and did not apply for a voucher for her 1st grade. We thought once she was qualified for the voucher, it would stay with her through her completion of 8th grade. Therefore, we lost our voucher. We chose not to uproot our daughter from her current learning program at her school in order to try and requalify her. We felt like it would be an unnecessary traumatic experience for our young daughter who already struggles with social anxiety and change. We strongly support this bill that would allow qualified applicants to be automatically enrolled for subsequent years.

We contacted the office of State Representative Shae Sortwell and were informed this has happened to numerous people. We would like to help those in the future avoid confusion and frustration with the current program structure.

Sincerely,

Scott and Crystal Cole