



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Representative Gary Hebl, Chair
Members, Assembly Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Kim Wadas, Associate Director, Education and Health Care

DATE: March 2, 2010

RE: Assembly Bill 726, Tax Credits for Charitable Contributions to Schools

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference urges your support for Assembly Bill 726. AB 726 allows individuals and corporations to claim a nonrefundable tax credit for charitable contributions made to public school academic and curricular physical education programs and private school scholarship funds.

By creating a tax credit that will foster private investment in education, AB 726 ensures a universal commitment to quality education in Wisconsin. Both individuals and corporations will be encouraged by this credit to aid those institutions in their communities, both public and private, that strive to expand the educational opportunities available to students.

Parents are the primary educators of their children, but society must support parents in this role by providing the resources necessary to aid parents. By offering a tax credit that both encourages investment in public schools and allows families greater access to financial assistance through scholarship funds for private schools, AB 726 will level the playing for Wisconsin's students, making certain that families are able to select the institution that best meets a student's educational needs.

As Catholics, we are called to support and exercise a "preferential option for the poor." This principle is advanced when those of limited means are empowered with the same opportunities provided to those who enjoy more material possessions. In the field of education, communities and schools need to be creative in improving the current educational divides of economics and status that can mar a student's experience.

Children of low-income families are most likely to be limited in their choice of educational opportunity. Oftentimes, families of limited means are unable to afford the expense of attending the educational institution of their choice. By allowing private contributions to help eliminate the fiscal barriers that may be prevent these students from accessing that education, AB 726 makes certain all families are provided with the same opportunity to seek out a quality education.

It is also important to affirm the decision to extend this credit to all schools, be they public or private schools. Too often policy debates represent these schools as competitors or adversaries.

OVER

In fact they are partners, all dedicated to the same end of developing productive and informed citizens. This bill recognizes the common contribution made by all educational institutions and is one more reason to support it.

Wisconsin has always been on the forefront of education, recognizing the need to grow and expand quality educational opportunities for our children. By fostering investment in quality education through charitable giving tax credits, Wisconsin can continue the proud tradition of ensuring that superior educational opportunities are available to all.

The WCC urges your support for AB 726.