



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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BISHOPS URGE SUPPORT FOR CHOICE IN EDUCATION

The Roman Catholic bishops of Wisconsin wrote to members of the Wisconsin Legislature, urging them to support Governor Scott Walker's budget proposal, which would expand parental choice programs in the state and create the Special Needs Scholarship Program.

Noting the Church's long-standing commitment to quality education, especially for needy or vulnerable children, the bishops explained why educational choice is so vital. "We back this effort out of a conviction that parents, as the primary educators of their children, must have the community's support in selecting a form of education that best meets their child's needs – academic, psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical."

They continued, "Though this right extends to all families, we support this limited expansion as a much needed step in the right direction, especially for families hindered by limited means and limited options."

Legislators were reminded that this is not an issue of competition. "Vibrant religious and independent schools can and do coexist with quality public schools," observed the bishops. "It is possible to affirm and support both."

The bishops likened these programs to public/private collaborations that have existed in other sectors for centuries. "In our pluralistic society, we continually recognize the work of both public and private actors with state and federal funds. Catholic hospitals, charitable agencies, and universities, along with their public counterparts, receive public funds to assist the poor and vulnerable. Public and nongovernment sectors continually cooperate to make life better for thousands of needy people. It is true for Wisconsin families in their homes and outside of school, and it should be true for them in school as well."

The bishops concluded by focusing on the importance of fostering access to quality education in Wisconsin.

"For centuries, the Catholic Church has supported the role of education as integral to the advancement of the human person. It is as important as a right to food, shelter, clothing, and work. As a people of faith, we have been, and remain, willing and useful partners with public institutions. Our Catholic school communities are eager to strengthen this partnership in education. We hope our contributions continue to be welcome. Please support choice in education."

-30-

A copy of the letter to the Members of the Legislature is attached and is also available at www.wisconsinatholic.org. For more information, contact Kim Wadas at 608-257-0004.