

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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ARCHBISHOP DOLAN ASKS LEGISLATORS TO APPROVE PARENTAL CHOICE, SAGE PACKAGE

Archbishop Timothy Dolan of the Milwaukee Archdiocese has urged legislators to approve the compromise proposal negotiated by Governor Jim Doyle and Assembly Speaker John Gard to significantly increase the cap for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program and provide additional funding for smaller class sizes in public schools. The Archbishop made his request in a letter to the members of the Senate Education Committee and the Assembly Committee on Education Reform.

“The Milwaukee Parental Choice program has proven to be a successful reform that is critically helpful to thousands of Milwaukee families,” the Archbishop wrote. “The proposal secures the program for the foreseeable future. The families who value choice will be free from worry and uncertainty that cap-induced rationing will deny their children access to schools that can help them.”

The Archbishop also praised the package for being comprehensive and inclusive by providing for additional resources for public schools.

“As I said last year, support for parental choice and support for public education are not mutually exclusive positions. The support of Wisconsin’s other bishops and myself for the voucher program is matched by a desire to affirm and improve public schools. This package models the spirit of inclusion that can and should be a model for future educational policy initiatives,” he added.

Archbishop Dolan further called attention to the items in the package that strengthen the accountability of choice schools.

“Just as the inclusion of resources for public schools debunks the concern that voucher proponents are not invested in strong public schools, so do the provisions on accreditation and testing put to rest concerns that those of us who support educational options are disinterested in assuring that schools meet credible standards,” he wrote.

Praising the bi-partisan nature of the agreement, the Archbishop expressed his gratitude that “(f)or the first time, high-level leaders of both parties have been able to agree that parental choice has a respected and essential place in our policy agenda.”

“This package is not perfect. No proposal is. But it is the product of serious give and take on the part of our state’s leaders. It is an example of the cooperation and leadership that makes Wisconsin a special place in which new ideas emerge and grow beside established programs in our policy landscape,” Archbishop Dolan concluded.

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