



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

### **TESTIMONY REGARDING ASSEMBLY BILL 165 Presented to the Assembly Committee on Education Reform May 22, 2007**

Good morning. My name is Kim Wadas, and on behalf of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, I am testifying in opposition to Assembly Bill 165.

AB 165 would permit local school districts to deny transportation services to children who attend four-year-old kindergarten at religious and independent schools if the public school district does not operate a four-year-old kindergarten program. We request that you oppose this change from current law.

We recognize that some additional expense may accrue to public school districts when they do not operate such programs, but we believe that financial consideration must give way to the safety of school children. It is because the legislature has retreated from the commitment it made decades ago to provide for the safe transport of all children who do not live within walking distance of their schools that public schools find themselves in financial difficulty today. However, four-year-olds are our youngest and most vulnerable students. It is not appropriate to expose these students to potential harm by eliminating their safe ride to school.

Parents who send their children to private schools already save the state over a billion dollars, all the while supporting public schools with their state and property tax dollars. The only major benefit that these families receive from the state is transportation for their children. We do not judge that it is equitable to take that away.

For all these reasons, we urge you to vote against Assembly Bill 165. Thank you.