



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: State Senator John Lehman, Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Kim Wadas, Associate Director 

DATE: February 21, 2008

RE: Senate Bill 349, Pupil Records in Milwaukee Parental Choice Program Schools

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) opposes Senate Bill 349, which would place new compliance requirements on schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP).

While the WCC supports providing information to parents, guardians, and students regarding a pupil's record, this bill is unnecessary as Catholic schools within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, as well as other MPCP schools, already make progress report information available to parents and students.

Catholic schools support a parent's role as the primary educator of their child. To aid in this role, Catholic schools regularly sent out progress reports detailing course information, pupil grades, and other particulars regarding a pupil's instruction. All Archdiocesan schools issue high school diplomas upon completion of instruction and transfer student records, upon notification, to other educational institutions. Catholic schools within the Archdiocese can also provide copies of records, such as immunization records, to a parent, guardian, or pupil upon request.

However, on occasion, there are valid reasons to delay the transfer of pupil records. For example, individuals who are exiting the eighth grade usually receive notice of their acceptance into a secondary school program in November or December of their eighth grade school year. Secondary schools may request pupil records for eighth graders entering their school at that time. However, schools may delay in providing this information to the requesting school until final grades and attendance records for the semester are gathered. This bill does not allow for flexibility in these situations and would severely punish a MPCP school for noncompliance.

Finally, we note that this bill would require a certified public accountant, who conducts the independent financial audit of a school, to also be responsible for determining a school's compliance with the requirements of SB 349. The WCC supports maintaining student privacy. Therefore, we question whether this is the most appropriate means of ensuring compliance while maintaining student privacy.

The WCC appreciates the opportunity to provide this testimony and urges you to oppose SB 349.