



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt, Chair
Members, Committee on Education

FROM: Larry Haas, Associate Director, Wisconsin Catholic Conference

DATE: April 18, 2019

RE: Support for AB 129, Virtual Instruction in Parental Choice Program Schools

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) greatly appreciates the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Wisconsin Catholic schools participating in the parental choice programs. The WCC testifies in support of Assembly Bill 129, which recognizes virtual instruction hours as contributing to the required number of instructional hours for private schools participating in the parental choice programs.

Most importantly, AB 129 recognizes that learning occurs not only in the physical classroom setting, but due to unforeseen circumstances, it may also appropriately occur through a virtual learning system. In today's world, opportunities to learn must be flexible. Virtual learning allows students and schools to adjust to any number of obstacles such as inclement weather, teacher shortages, or other issues arising out of a school's control. In order to meet the required 1,050 hours of direct pupil instruction in grades 1 to 6 and at least 1,137 hours of direct pupil instruction in grades 7 to 12, parental choice program schools need access to the same alternatives available to their public-school counterparts. Virtual instruction is a valuable resource that, in times of emergency for certain schools, becomes an absolute necessity.

Our state's education laws and policies should also permit all families and schools, including private choice schools, public schools, and especially those in rural communities or with limited means, to have an array of educational opportunities that provide access to quality programming and that can be adapted to a school or family's need. Assembly Bill 129 truly acknowledges the diverse quality resources that are available to schools today and ensures that those resources may be uniformly accessed by all schools. This legislation makes certain that students and schools are not limited in their efforts to be innovative in the pursuit of academic success.

We respectfully request your support for AB 129.