



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

**TESTIMONY ON ASSEMBLY BILL 562: PARENTAL NOTIFICATION OF
PROGRAMS RELATED TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER,
GENDER IDENTITY, OR GENDER EXPRESSION**
Presented to the Assembly Committee on Education
By Kim Vercauteren, Executive Director
September 16, 2021

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, urges you to support Assembly Bill 562, which requires public school boards and operators of independent charter schools to give notice to parents or guardians regarding any programs related to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression.

Human sexuality and expression are both intensely personal and social, impacting children's lives and how they navigate society. While opinions differ regarding how best to educate children about gender and sexual attraction, as the first and primary educators of their children, parents and guardians must be included in assessing when and how best to broach these sensitive topics.

Unfortunately, some Wisconsin school districts have failed to make parents and guardians aware of when their children have received instruction or have been surveyed about gender, sexuality, or even personal sexual experiences. This undermines parental authority and responsibility. No educational policy should substitute the authority of a teacher, school board, school staff, or contracted entity for that of parents, especially when it comes to matters that have a far-reaching impact on the emotional, physical, and moral well-being of their children. Public laws and educational policies must be designed to support and affirm the essential role of parents in their child's ongoing education and development.

In the interests of transparency and cooperation, AB 562 makes certain that parents and guardians are aware of when their child will be participating in programs related to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression. Parents and guardians must also be instructed on how they may inspect all materials, curricula, and other program components.

If a family does not desire a student's participation in these activities, AB 562 ensures that the student's parent or guardian may opt, through written request, to forgo participating in them. This notification and ability to opt out is essential for families that choose to emphasize what Pope Francis described as "the beautiful differences and complementary relationship between man and woman."

The best education teaches children to develop their unique character and potential, to grow in their capacity for love and responsibility. We applaud Assembly Bill 562 for fostering transparency and inclusivity among parents, educators, students, and staff, and for ensuring that

parents are recognized as primary and essential participants in a child's education and development.

For all these reasons, I urge you to support Assembly Bill 562.

Thank you.