



"LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE"

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TO: All State Representatives

FROM: Sheri Krause, Legislative Services Coordinator

DATE: February 28, 2008

RE: Assembly Bill 870, relating to virtual charter schools

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) supports the bipartisan, compromise agreement on virtual charter schools as reflected in AB 870, which is scheduled for a vote by the Assembly on Thursday, Feb. 28. The agreement would maintain local control of online courses and allow virtual charter schools to continue in Wisconsin while establishing reasonable state standards for their operation.

The WASB commends Rep. Brett Davis for working with his colleagues in the Senate to develop a bipartisan agreement on legislation to ensure the continuation of virtual charter schools in Wisconsin with state standards. Unfortunately, that agreement was modified in the Senate to effectively prohibit new virtual charter schools in Wisconsin and cap enrollment to the existing schools until the 2015-16 school year.

Legislators should reject efforts to prevent school districts from creating new, innovative programs and to cap enrollment to existing public school programs. Rather, the Legislature should be working with school boards to embrace the expanding opportunities presented by technology and support efforts in public schools to ensure that the educational needs of all students are met.

School funding reform is crucial to the future of public education in Wisconsin. School boards continue to face revenue shortfalls and declining enrollments while being challenged on a daily basis to prepare their students for a global economy. Together, we must work towards a sustainable school funding system that provides the necessary resources to educate the next generation of citizens while recognizing the constraints of taxpayers. But, stymieing innovation in public schools will not solve the funding dilemma or contribute to improved student achievement.

The bipartisan, compromise agreement on virtual charter schools as reflected in AB 870 provides an appropriate balance in moving forward with technology and innovation while providing state standards and safeguards. The WASB urges your support.