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**WISCONSIN STATE
LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE
HEARING RECORDS**

2009-10

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

**Committee on
Education**

(AC-Ed)

(FORM UPDATED: 06/28/2010)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

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**INFORMATION COLLECTED BY
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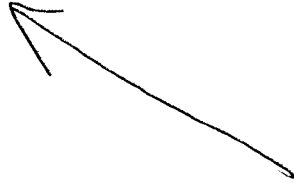
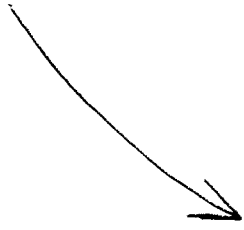
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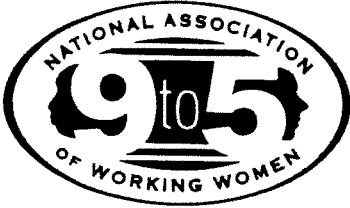
5/19/09

PH on

AB 116, 204 & 210 & ES on AB 119







9to5, National Association of Working Women

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Testimony of Jennifer Morales
Mother of three current Milwaukee Public Schools students
and former member (2001-2009) of the Milwaukee Board of School Directors
to
the Assembly Education Committee
19 May 2009

Thank you to Chairperson Pope-Roberts for holding this hearing on AB 116. The last time I was here I had the privilege of witnessing the testimony of many of my fellow parents and school board members from around the state as they made the case for school finance reform, so I appreciate the chair's continued attention to the need for policy changes that give our children what they need to succeed in school.

Like school finance reform, AB 116 open doors for children, in this case by opening doors for their parents and guardians.

In my eight years as a Milwaukee school board member, I often heard two refrains from members of the public: "If we already know what works in education, why don't you just do it?" and "Why aren't *those* parents involved in their children's education?" This bill responds to both of those questions:

"If we already know what works in education, why don't you just do it?" One thing that experienced educators know is how much difference parental involvement in school makes. When addressing every type of concern that might come up in school, from academic, to health, to disciplinary concerns, children do better when they know that there is a solid line of communication between their parents and their teachers. Ask any teacher why one of the first steps in disciplining a child is often having him or her call home. When that child knows that Teacher has Mom's phone number, and that Mom has enough of a relationship with Teacher to trust the teacher's version of the story, 9 times out of 10 that child is going to shape up. A key component in building that strong school/home relationship is the parent's presence in the school, whether it's at parent-teacher conferences or school assemblies or special classroom events.

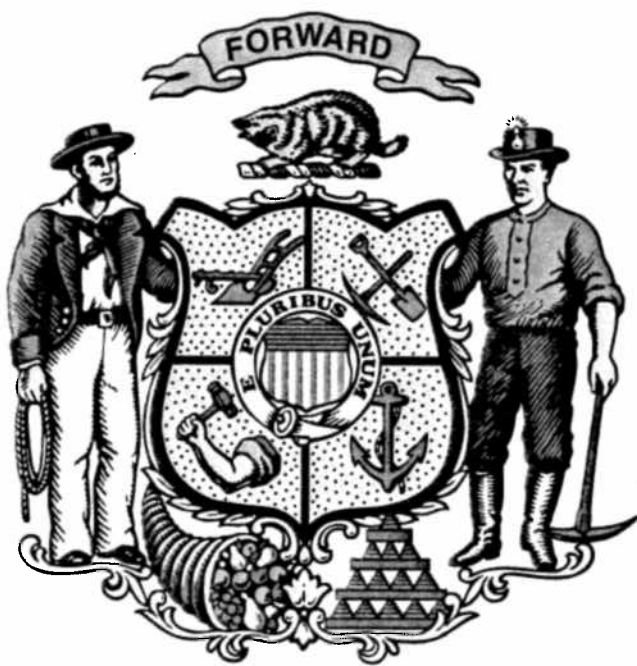
Parent involvement works, but there are structural barriers in many jobs that keep parents from being involved in school—particularly during the class day, when it's most needed—and it's the responsibility of policymakers to address these barriers, for the public good.



Which leads to the second refrain I often heard:

“Why aren’t those parents involved in their children’s education?” People who don’t have children in the Milwaukee Public Schools, or any other district in Wisconsin that serves a majority low-income population, might not have the life experiences to understand how many barriers there are to parent involvement in schools. For most families in Milwaukee, having a full-time stay-at-home parent is not possible. For many, family economic stability requires two working parents, often at multiple jobs. Throw in some childcare obligations for the kids not yet school-aged, a spotty public transportation system, and an inflexible boss, and the end result is a parent who can’t make it to parent-teacher conferences before or after work, and certainly not during the school day.

We have to have policies, like AB 116, that make it possible for all parents to be involved in their children’s education. We can’t complain about parents not being involved in school if we as a society don’t open doors to parental involvement. Please support this key first step, AB 116.





WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TESTIMONY REGARDING ASSEMBLY BILL 116: SCHOOL CONFERENCE LEAVE

Presented by John Huebscher, Executive Director
May 19, 2009

On behalf of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, I strongly urge you to support Assembly Bill 116, which allows employees to take leave from work to attend a child's day care or school function.

By allowing parents the flexibility to attend important school functions and to play a direct role in the daily instruction of their children, AB 116 would facilitate an essential element of successful education, parental involvement. In his 1981 encyclical letter, *On Human Work*, Pope John Paul II discussed the relationship between work and family life at some length. In his discussion the Pope said the following:

“These two spheres of values—one linked to work and the other consequent on the family nature of human life—must be properly united and must properly permeate each other... Two aspects of work in a sense come into play here: the one making family life and its upkeep possible, and the second making possible the achievement of the purposes of the family, especially education.” (#11)

The Pope continued by stating that work itself should be:

“organized and adapted in such a way as to respect the requirements of the person, and his or her forms of life, above all life in the home.” (#19)

These ideas are echoed by the Catholic bishops of the United States in their pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, and in their 1992 statement, “Putting Children and Families First.” The American bishops have emphasized that the true measure of an economy is not just what it produces but whether or not it protects human dignity and promotes family life. Giving employees time off to attend to their children's educational needs does just that.

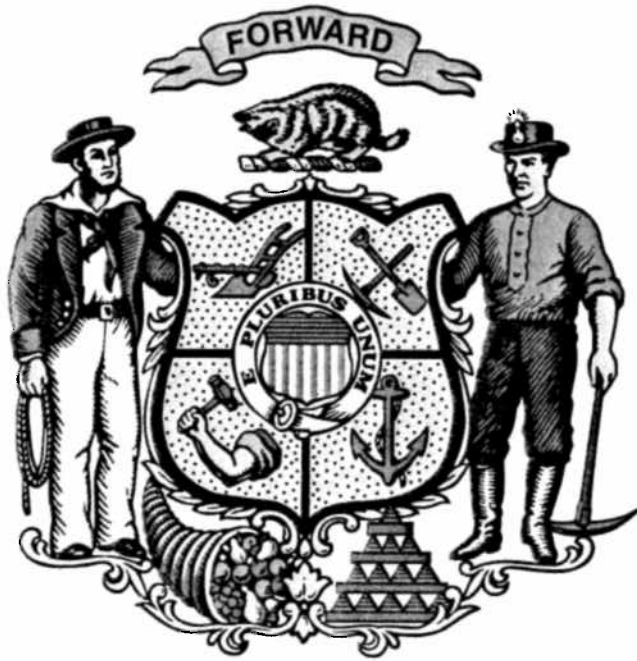
As the bishops reflected in *Economic Justice for All*, “economic and social policies of the work world should be continually evaluated in light of their impact on the strength and stability of family life,” (#93). The well-being of families is a proper concern for government and public authorities. In several ways, the political community has a duty to honor the family, to assist it, and to ensure that a variety of goods are available to families in order to meet their responsibilities to one another and the broader community.

Over

AB 116 is consistent with these values. It affirms and encourages parents to be more involved in the education of their children by being present at school for significant events in the educational life of their child. By restructuring the workplace to make room for school visits, the bill represents a commitment by the rest of us as “indirect employers” to support parents in their roles as primary educators.

By allowing parents to attend and participate in school and day care activities, we affirm our commitment to make the family an integral part of education in the State of Wisconsin.

The WCC urges your support for AB 116.



The Alliance School
234 W. Galena
Milwaukee, WI 53212

May 19, 2009

Dear Representative Pope Roberts:

As the Lead Teacher, and former special education teacher, for The Alliance School in Milwaukee, I am writing this letter to express my urgent support for the AB 116. At our school, between 20 and 40% of the students are identified as having special needs. We work closely with the parents of these students to make sure that their needs are being met, through conferences, IEP meetings and Coordinated Service Team meetings. From our experience, it is absolutely clear that family involvement in the education of students is the critical difference for the majority of students when it comes to educational achievement. For students with special needs, this often means two or three IEP meetings a year, conferences four times a year and parental involvement when a child requires interventions by counselors, social workers or teams of teachers. When all of these things are working together, students progress quickly and confidently towards graduation. Unfortunately, for many families, this type of involvement is not an option because of work demands that make it impossible for them to take off work without risk of losing their jobs. Nobody should have to choose between their children's future needs (for a diploma) and their children's immediate needs (for food, safety and shelter), and this is often what parents have to do.

I am urging you to support AB 116, because I have personally witnessed the difference that parent involvement can make, and I want all parents to have that opportunity. I have also heard the pain I in parents voices when they can't make it, and I am hoping that this will make their lives just a little easier.

Thank you for your support of our families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tina Owen". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Tina Owen
Lead Teacher, The Alliance School



WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

Affiliated with the National Education Association

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TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

FR: Wisconsin Education Association Council

DA: May 19, 2009

RE: AB 116 (School Conference and Activities Leave)

The Wisconsin Education Association Council support Assembly Bill 116 allowing parents to take up to 16 hours of leave time from work to participate in children's school activities and conferences that cannot be scheduled during nonworking hours.

Parental involvement helps children to be successful in school. Parents are an important part of an education team which includes student, educators and communities working together for a brighter future. When parents are involved, their children achieve higher grades and test scores, develop better attitudes and behavior, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, graduate from high school and enroll in postsecondary education.

Great schools benefit everyone and making it easier for parents to get time off of work to attend teacher conferences and student activities will increase parental involvement and enhance children's chances for success in school.

According to the Education Commission of the States, at least 15 states encourage, urge, expect or direct employers to enable parents to attend school activities such as parent/teacher conferences: Alabama, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and West Virginia. ¹

State	Enacted	Summary
Alabama	1994	Encourages the business community and governmental agencies to give administrative leave to parents for the purpose of parent-teacher conferences and involvement in other educational experiences of the child (ALA. ACTS 159).
California	1990	Prohibits employers with at least 25 employees from firing or in any way discriminating against an employee for taking off up to 40 hours each year to participate in school-related activities, subject to a limitation of eight hours in any calendar month. Employees must give reasonable notice to their employers and may be required to provide proof of attendance. Employees must utilize existing vacation, personal leave or compensatory time off, unless otherwise provided for by a collective bargaining agreement. An employee also may utilize time off without pay for this purpose. Employees discharged, threatened with discharge, demoted, suspended or in any other

¹ <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/59/11/5911.pdf>

Mary Bell, President
Dan Burkhalter, Executive Director



		manner discriminated against for taking time off to participate in school activities is entitled to reinstatement and reimbursement for lost wages and work benefits (CAL. LAB. CODE § 230.8).
Colorado	1996	Supports parental involvement in the public schools and encourages parents to visit their children's classrooms at least once a semester. Encourages businesses with more than 10 employees to allow each employee at least two hours per school semester to attend parent-teacher conferences, special presentations and school-related committees. Also encourages the recognition of businesses that show their commitments to children and education through their understanding of the importance of parental involvement (COLO. S.J.R. 15).
Hawaii	2003	Public employees are eligible for at least two hours of paid leave during normal business hours to attend parent-teacher conferences for K-12 students or parent-caregiver conferences for preschool-aged children. The leave will not be credited against vacation or sick time. The provision of paid leave must not adversely interfere with the operations of the workplace nor require the applicable agency to incur additional human resources or overtime costs. The employee may take no more than two conferences per child in a single calendar year and travel time is included as part of the two hours (HAW. REV. STAT. § 78-31).
Illinois	1993	An employer must grant up to eight hours leave during any school year for employees to attend school conferences or classroom activities related to their children if the conference or classroom activities cannot be scheduled during non-work hours. No leave may be taken unless the employee has exhausted all leave that may be granted, except sick and disability leave. The employee must provide the employer with a written request for leave at least seven days in advance. In emergency situations, no more than 24 hours notice is required. The employee must consult with the employer to schedule the leave so as not to disrupt unduly the operations of the employer. The employer is not required to issue paid leave (ILL. REV. STAT. CH 820 § 147/15).
Louisiana	1993	An employer may grant an employee leave from work of up to a total of 16 hours during any 12-month period to attend, observe or participate in conferences or classroom activities related to the employee's children that are conducted at the child's school or day care center, if the conferences or classroom activities cannot be scheduled during non-work hours. Employees must provide reasonable notice and make a reasonable effort to schedule the leave so as not to unduly disrupt the operations of the employer. An employer is not required to pay an employee for any time taken as leave. An employee is permitted to substitute any accrued vacation time or other appropriate paid leave (LA. REV. STAT. ANN. § 1015.2).
Minnesota	1990 (last	An employer must grant an employee leave of up to a total of 16 hours



	amended 2003)	during any 12-month period to attend school conferences or school-related activities related to the employee's child, provided they cannot be scheduled during non-work hours. When the need for the leave is foreseeable, the employee must provide reasonable prior notice and make a reasonable effort to schedule the leave so as not to unduly disrupt the operations of the employer. An employer is not required to grant paid leave, although an employee may substitute any accrued appropriate paid leave (MINN. STAT. ANN. § 181.9412).
North Carolina	1993	Allows four hours unpaid leave per year to any employee who is a parent or guardian of a school-aged child so that the employee may attend or otherwise be involved at that child's school. The leave must be at a mutually agreed upon time between the employer and the employee and the employer may require an employee to provide a written request for the leave at least 48 hours before the time desired for the leave. The employer may also require that the employee furnish written verification from the child's school that the employee attended or was otherwise involved at that school during the time of the leave (N.C. GEN. STAT. § 95-28.3).
Oklahoma	1989	Directs the state board to establish a program encouraging private employers to give employees leave to attend parent-teacher conferences at least once each semester. Also directs the state board to require school boards to develop initiatives promoting schools as congenial places for parents to visit. Establishes state board policy to encourage public schools to explore outreach opportunities (OKLA. STAT. TIT. 70 § 10-105.2).
Oregon	1995	The state legislature recommends that (1) school districts provide opportunities for parents or guardians to be involved in establishing and implementing educational goals and to participate in decision-making at the school site, (2) employers recognize the need for parents or guardians and members of the community to participate in the education process not only for their own children but for the educational system, (3) <i>employers be encouraged to extend appropriate leave to parents or guardians to allow greater participation in that process during school hours</i> , (4) school districts enter into partnerships with business, labor and other groups to provide workplace-based professional development opportunities for their educational staff and (5) school districts enter into partnerships with recreation groups, faith-based organizations, social service and health care agencies, businesses, child care providers and other groups that support children and families to create community learning centers for students, parents and members of the surrounding community (OR. REV. STAT. § 329.125).
South Carolina	2000	The education oversight committee, in cooperation with representatives of the department of commerce, the department of revenue, and the South Carolina chamber of commerce, will develop recommendations for employer tax credits as incentives to: (1) <i>provide parent-employee release time for parent-teacher conferences or</i>



		<i>attendance at their children's academic-related events without loss of pay and (2) develop workplace policies which enable parents to improve their literacy, assist their children with academics, and become more involved in their child's education as a result of employers working with local school officials (S.C. CODE ANN. § 59-28-220).</i>
Tennessee	2000	Urges employers to excuse employees from work to attend parent-teacher conferences when given 24-hour notice (TENN. H.J.R. 56)
Texas	1997 (renumbered 1999, amended 2003)	Employees may use up to eight hours of sick leave each fiscal year to attend parent-teacher conferences for their children in grades K-12. An employee must give reasonable advance notice to their employer (TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. § 661.206).
Utah	1996 (amended 2000)	Recognizing the importance of parental participation in the educational process, it is state policy to encourage parents to provide a home environment that values education and send their children to school prepared to learn, rely upon school districts and schools to provide opportunities for parents of students to be involved in establishing and implementing educational goals and <i>expect employers to recognize the need for parents and members of the community to participate in the public education system in order to help students achieve and maintain excellence.</i> Local school boards must adopt policies on parental involvement. Policies must provide parents with the opportunity to be actively involved in their child's education and inform them of the importance of their involvement in directly affecting the educational success of their child (UTAH CODE ANN. § 53A-1A-105).
West Virginia	1990 (last amended 2003)	Establishes local school improvement councils at every school. School improvement councils may receive school of excellence awards and competitive grant awards and expend such grants. In order to promote innovations and improvements at the school, a school improvement council will receive cooperation from the school in implementing policies and programs it may adopt for a number of purposes, including to encourage the involvement of parents or guardians in their child's educational process and in the school <i>or to encourage businesses to provide time for their employees to meet with teachers concerning their child's education</i> (W. VA. CODE § 18-5A-2).

Please support Assembly Bill 116.

If you have any questions, contact Deb Sybell, WEAC Legislative Program Coordinator, at (608) 298-2327.



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Testimony in Support of AB 116 before the Assembly Committee on Education May 19, 2009

Thank you for allowing me to speak in support of Assembly Bill 116 and the proposed amendments to the Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave Act which would expand the law to include school conferences and activities. I'm Beth Oswald, and I have taught seventh grade world history at J. C. McKenna Middle School in Evansville, Wisconsin for the past thirteen years since graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Beloit College in 1995. I received my Master of Education and Professional Development degree from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse in 2003, and continued my education by completing a hands-on "Archaeology for Educators" program there. I have most recently begun work on my Doctorate in Educational Leadership through Walden University. Last year was an exciting one for me, for I was honored to serve as Wisconsin's State Teacher of the Year. As such, I believe I speak for all Wisconsin educators when I say I wholeheartedly support Assembly Bill 116, and believe it would do much to improve the educational system.

As an educator, I have found that as kids get older, parents become less involved with their children's education. This decline in involvement does not happen because parents *care* less about what happens at school, rather it occurs due to the nature of adolescents – they wish to be more independent, and therefore, tend to share less information about their school experience. For this reason, we have begun holding student led conferences, where kids share portfolios of their work along with academic and personal goals. Parents have been overwhelmingly positive about this style of conference, and state they enjoy seeing what their children are learning, hearing about their perceived strengths and weaknesses, and discussing their short and long-term goals. Having the student, parent(s), and teacher all sitting together discussing learning and its impact on the future of that young person is a very powerful thing. It sends a strong message that we are a team, united in helping that student be successful. Unfortunately, not all parents are able to attend these conferences due to their work schedules.

This problem is nothing new – there have always been a number of parents unable to attend conferences due to scheduling conflicts. This year only two of my 13 homeroom students' parents could not attend on conference night. Because of instances like this, our staff regularly arranges for conferences to be held at alternate times to accommodate parents' work schedules. And regardless of the fact that these rescheduled conferences usually occur on our own personal time – before school, after school or during our compensation time – we do so because we know the *value* of meeting face to face with our students' parents.

One of these valuable rescheduled conferences occurred last year for "Danny" and his adopted mom. Danny stated his mom could not attend on conference night. He thought (okay, he's a teenager, rather "hoped") that would be the end of it, but after many phone messages on both ends, I arranged for his conference to be held the next day during my compensated time. I'm glad we rescheduled, because after Danny shared his portfolio, his mom shared numerous concerns for, and insights into, her son. He has ADHD, I learned, and was already falling behind in some of his classes – so we arranged for him to check-out each day with me before leaving school to be sure he had all his homework, then do the same thing with his mom in the morning to be sure he had all he needed to be successful for the day. She also shared that he would be receiving counseling related to his mother's death and sibling issues, and asked me to share any changes in behavior or mood I, or any other seventh grade teachers, may observe so she could share this information with the counselor. Our 20-minute conference became nearly an hour – an hour that would not have happened had I not pushed for the conference to occur at a different time – and an hour that turned out to be tremendously beneficial in contributing to the success of a 12 year-old boy. I truly believe that without the face-to-face personal contact with Danny's mom, she would not have felt comfortable sharing this important personal information with me, and maybe would not have shared it at all.

In my experience, I have found that parents who attend conferences are more likely to initiate contact with their child's homeroom teacher with concerns about their child's academic *and* emotional well being – probably because they now have a comfort level with that staff member. These parents are also much more likely to respond in a positive manner when contacted regarding any concerns staff may have about their child, as they now see teachers as partners, rather than adversaries. Additionally, once parent teacher relationships are formed through contact at open house and conferences, parents tend to feel more comfortable attending school-day activities like our Toga and Medieval Days', or chaperoning field trips.

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Such parent-staff-student relationships are difficult to develop and foster without initial, and continued, in-person meetings. Assembly Bill 116 would help these relationships occur, by giving employees the *right* to attend such valuable and vital school conferences and activities. And while we cannot mandate that parents attend their children's conferences and meetings, this bill would go a long way toward making it easier for parents who "wish they could attend," to actually do so.

For all of these reasons, please pass Assembly Bill 116. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Beth Oswald
3425 East Charley Bluff Road
Milton, WI 53563

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Wisconsin State AFL-CIO ...the voice for working families.

David Newby, President • Sara J. Rogers, Exec. Vice President • Phillip L. Neuenfeldt, Secretary-Treasurer

TO: Assembly Education Committee
FROM: Phil Neuenfeldt, Secretary-Treasurer
DATE: May 19, 2009

RE: **SUPPORT FOR ASSEMBLY BILL 116**
Extends Family & Medical Leave to School-Related Activities

This legislation provides a much needed expansion of rights under Wisconsin's Family and Medical Leave Act to make it a bit easier for working parents to be involved in their children's education or monitor their care. It does not increase leave time allowed under the Act but does allow up to 16 hours in 12 months for parents to participate in school activities or monitor child care when it cannot be scheduled during non-working time. Research has shown that parental involvement is more important than family education level or income in determining a child's achievement level.

AB 116 would be the first improvement in Wisconsin's Family and Medical Leave Act since it passed in 1988. This is further evidence of the woefully inadequate pace in which employment policy and public policy are changing to address the realities of workers' lives. Given that most families have both parents in the workforce, and there are also many single-parent households, the right to take some minimal amount of time off from work to be involved in a child's education or care is more important than ever. We ask for your support.

PN/JR/mj:opeiu#9,afl-cio,clc

6333 West Blue Mound Road • Milwaukee, WI, 53213
Phone: 414-771-0700 • Fax: 414-771-1715
Web Site: www.wisaficio.org • E-Mail: Solidarity@wisaficio.org





TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education
FROM: John Metcalf, Director, Human Resources Policy
DATE: May 19, 2009
RE: Opposition to AB 116 – Mandated School Conference and Activities Leave

Background

Current Wisconsin and Federal Law require employers with 50 or more employees to provide Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) to their employees. The length of leave entitlements vary between the State and Federal laws, as do the qualifying requirements and administration of the two laws. Because of these variations the FMLA's are among the most complex that Wisconsin employers must administer.

School Conference and Activity Leave

AB 116 creates an additional leave entitlement of up to 16 hours of school conference and activities leave in a 12-month period under Wisconsin's FMLA for any employee of an employer, employing at least 50 individuals on a permanent basis in this state. School conference and activities leave may be taken to attend school conferences or classroom activities relating to the employee's child that cannot be scheduled during nonworking hours. In addition, school conference and activities leave may be taken to observe and monitor the day care, preschool, or pre-kindergarten services or programming received by an employee's child, if that observation and monitoring cannot be scheduled during nonworking hours.

Substitution of Paid Leave

An employee may substitute, for portions of school conference and activities leave, other types of paid or unpaid leave provided by the employer, except that an employee may not substitute paid leave of less than an hour for school conference and activities leave for attending a school conference or activity.

Notice of Leave

An employee who intends to take leave to attend a school conference or activity must give the employer advance notice of the conference or activity and must make a reasonable effort to schedule the conference or activity so that it does not unduly disrupt the operations of the employer.

Definition of School

"School" is defined as: a day care center licensed by the Department of Health and Family Services; a day care provider certified for funding by a county department of human services or social services; a day care program established or contracted for by a school board; a public or private preschool or pre-kindergarten, or a public or private school that provides an educational program for one or more grades between kindergarten and 12.

WMC POSITION – OPPOSE

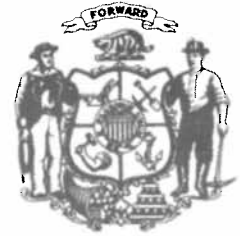
WMC strongly supports conformity of the existing federal and Wisconsin FMLA's that are currently difficult to administer. Until broad conformity occurs between Wisconsin's FMLA and the federal FMLA, WMC opposes any expansion of the state FMLA, including the creation of an additional form of mandated leave. Further, in any given session of the U.S. Congress and the Wisconsin Legislature, legislation to expand the existing state and federal FMLA's are proposed, as well as to mandate further types of leave for other reasons. However, no legislation has been enacted to attempt to coordinate these mandates – creating a significant and growing problem with the administration of mandated as well as employer provided employee leave benefits in U.S. and Wisconsin work places.

Therefore, we urge you to vote **against** AB 116.



State Representative Spencer Black

Date?



State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708
rep.black@legis.wi.gov
(608) 266-7521

TESTIMONY ON AB 116 FAMILY LEAVE FOR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

AB 116 expands Wisconsin's Family leave law to allow parents to take up to 16 hours of leave each year to attend parent teacher conferences, or other school activities that cannot be scheduled in non-work hours. The bill also allows parents of preschool children to take family leave time to monitor their children's pre-kindergarten or day care programs.

The bill does not require employers to provide employees with additional paid leave. Instead, it allows the employee to substitute up to 16 hours of vacation, sick leave, or other unpaid leave provided by the employer, when taking such leave is necessary to allow the employee to attend school conferences and classroom activities.

Research has shown that there is a direct and very strong relationship between parental involvement in a child's education and academic achievement. In fact, family participation in education is twice as predictive of student academic success as the family's socioeconomic status. As a former teacher, I have repeatedly seen this first hand with my students.

Research shows that greater parental involvement leads to higher grades and test scores, better attitudes and behavior, better school attendance, more homework completed, less chance of placement in special education, greater likelihood of graduating from high school, and a better chance of enrolling in postsecondary education.

Many parents miss school conferences because they can't take time off from work, and their children end up paying the price. Studies show this is especially true of low-wage workers and low-income families. Researchers at the Families and Work Institute found that only 29 percent of low-wage, low-income families have flexibility over starting and quitting times at their job, compared with 51 percent of higher-wage, higher-income parents. Children of low income families are often the kids who are most in need of the boost in school success that comes from increased parental involvement, but unfortunately their parents are the ones least likely to be able to attend school activities because of their workplace situation.

At least fifteen other states have similar laws already on the books, including Minnesota and Illinois and states as diverse as Texas, North Carolina, and Vermont. This bill is fair to employers. It only allows the leave if advance notice is given to the employer and the conference or school activity could not be scheduled during



nonworking hours. In addition, the employee taking the leave must make a reasonable effort to schedule the conference or activity so it does not disrupt the operations of their employer. The bill would not grant any additional paid leave to employees, although they could use paid leave to which they are already entitled for the school leave. The legislation applies to employers with 50 or more employees.





State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

Date ?

Testimony on 2009 Assembly Bill 116

I am Assistant State Superintendent Richard Grobschmidt, speaking on behalf of State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster and the Department of Public Instruction, in favor of Assembly Bill 116, a bill which would allow time for employees to participate in school conferences and activities for their children.

This proposal removes barriers and creates important protections for parents to be involved in their children's education. Indeed, families are their children's most important and influential teachers. Thirty years of research show that:

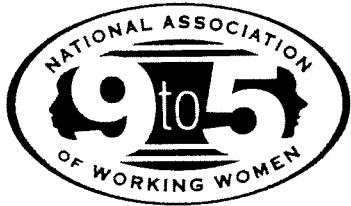
- When parents are involved in their children's learning, their children earn **higher grades** and test scores, and they stay in school longer, and
- When parents are involved in a variety of ways at school, the **performance of all** children in the school tends to improve.

In a recent survey sponsored by the Education Testing Service, teachers, administrators, the public and even parents say lack of parental involvement is the biggest challenge facing schools. We know from the research that all families want to and can help their children learn, **regardless** of their income or educational level. But wanting to and actually doing it doesn't always come together, especially for working parents juggling the responsibilities of their jobs and families.

We know the importance of schools reaching out to parents, but if parents aren't able to respond because of inflexibility in the work place, then we continue with the same lack of involvement. According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, 10 states require leave for participation in children's educational activities. California offers the most time, with 40 hours a year and no more than eight hours per month, while Washington, D.C., Massachusetts and Vermont offer 24 hours a year. Since low-wage jobs are the least flexible, many parents need this opportunity to be involved with their children's education.

Passing the bill would make an important statement that in Wisconsin we are serious about parents being essential partners in the education of their children.





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Rhonda Willette
2551 North 17th Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53206

Date ?

Mother of 8, Grandmother of 8

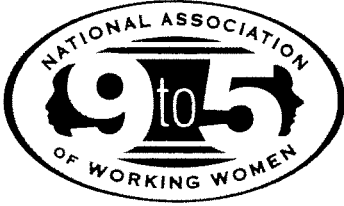
I presently work and have worked for a variety of non-profit organizations over the years. I have been fortunate as a divorced, single mother to have had the support of being in a workforce environment which allowed me as a parent to be involved in the growth and production of my children's education through the direct outlines of bill AB116.

Being actively involved builds a child's self esteem, encourages their growth, and keeps them out of trouble. This opens doors to teaching other adults to lead and therefore building stronger community support.

I personally know there are many empowerment events which gave my children the opportunity to shine and excel to be productive members in society. This has transferred generationally, as now some of my children are not parents themselves. I believe these are the years that build the child's most reliable support system. Having the opportunity to be involved at only 16 hours per year is not school age children's







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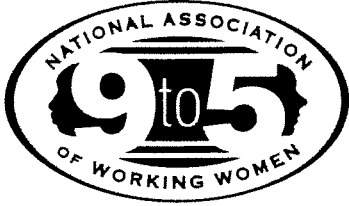
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I have received information that there is a School Conference and Activity Leave extension to the Family Medical Leave (AB 116). I feel as a grandparent of 9 children that it is very important for parents to be able to go to school conferences to find out what help their children need for them to do well in school.

Schools complain that not enough parents attend these conferences so we need to make it as easy as possible for parents to attend. In this economy, both parents need to work so they cannot afford a day off and to put their job at risk. It is also important that parents attend school activities to give their children support for their efforts and build a caring relationship between a parent and child.

Gloria Weiskotten
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Lila Saavedra, 9to5 Milwaukee member,
2236 S 20th St
Milwaukee, WI 53215

AB 116 ?
Date ?

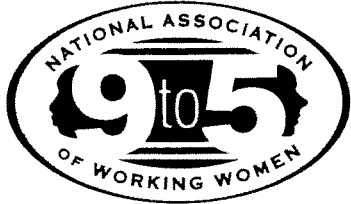
Testimony on Family Leave For School Activities

As a working mother and full time college student, I do not have as much time off for my daughter as I would like. It is difficult to meet with her teachers and take part in school activities because I am either attending classes or working.

It would be great to have the opportunity to take off of work for an hour or two so I can check up on my daughter in her head start program. I feel it is important for me as a mother to be able to meet with her teachers to see how she is behaving and progressing, without worrying about getting penalized from my employer.

A mother should not have to pick between checking on their child's schooling and risking the chance of being fired, a parent needs to take part in their child's life to let them know they care about their education. I know being a mother is a lot of work as is and by taking the time out with my daughter I can show her how important she is to me.





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Melody Evans-Hailey
2938 W Carmen Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53209
414-236-2301

Parent of 3. Grandparent of 7

I work in home health care. I see all the time people who don't get any visits from family. It makes a big difference. Just like with children. I want my children to remember that their parents love them enough to participate and be there for important things at school.

Parents need to participate in their children's lives. Like person being in a nursing home needs visits to be better.

When my kids were younger, I tried to be at their school as much as I could. At that time, my husband was working AO Smith that changed to Tower Automotive for 33 years. He could never get off of work for any of the children's activities. It wasn't considered important enough to the employer. One parent can't do it all, and he was unable because of work to be there for the kids, which affected them. They didn't have their daddy at school or cheering them on.

16 hours a year to take off is better than none.

I feel like we are in bondage to our employers, like I have no rights. Sometimes parents have to be off for their kids. That's what kids remember.

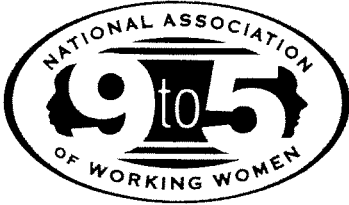
As a child, you need that moral support. Parents need to be active and just the fact that you are there. Everything changes when parents are around. Time off needs to be made available to active. We will have a better society and youth with have more hope with long and short term goals if parents are involved. Kids need heroes and they are supposed to be parents. Ones that are working are working so much that they can't be the heroes. They can't afford to lose their job and their check to be short.

It has a lot to do with how a teacher treats you. If parents are there and active, the teacher knows that. Parents have to part of the solution and not the problem.

I will be getting off for my grandchildren and fighting for their future.

I strongly support the School Conferences and Activities Bill.





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Tina Perry
Milwaukee, WI
414-750-8313

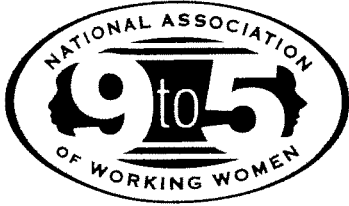
I work in health care as a CNA, both a day and a night shift. I am a parent of 3.

I have had problems getting to school if I don't know way in advance. My children bring home notes for conferences on a Friday and the meeting is scheduled on a Wednesday. I don't have enough notice in that case to get off work.

It is important to be able to take time off for my kids when they need me at school. My children will know and feel that I care when I am involved in their success at school. I want to be able to find out what's going on with them first hand.

Everyone should be able to take off and support their children at school.





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Frantrina Harris
Milwaukee WI

Parent of 1.

I think we need more teacher and parent communication.

I am firm believer of popping up. If you have a day off work, try to see the kid at school.

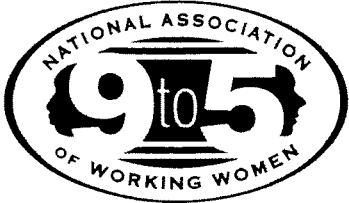
I know a lot of parents who are not able to show up at school. Parent teacher conferences are after school, but they are still not available to some parents, especially if the school is not in the neighborhood.

In my last job, I couldn't leave for a conference that was scheduled at 3 o'clock. I had to miss the conference and felt like a bad mother because I couldn't get off work.

It's hard for a lot of parents because they are at these jobs that won't let you leave to go see about their kids.

I support AB116. Parents who work need it.





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Jennifer Cox
Milwaukee, WI
414-760-1950

Single Parent of 5

I live in Milwaukee. I am a full time youth care worker.

Right now I have 4 kids in high school in different schools, one is in K-8. You could be called in at any hour and it's very frustrating. It's difficult to balance all the different schools. I haven't been able to go to one of the kids schools and have consequentially seen attendance and behavioral problems.

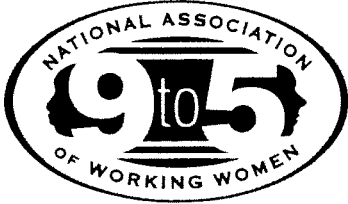
I was a high school drop out. It took me 11 years to get it through a GED. Now, I stress education quality.

We need AB116 to pass. I think the 16 hours is a minimum. Any way for us as working parents to have more hours added for our involvement is needed. We want to be involved in our children's education. We want them to do well.

I was a parent volunteer for 2 years, I saw the need for more parental involvement especially teaching respect in school.

If we don't have the support system, kids will fall through the cracks. They are supposed to be our future, but so many drop out. Graduation rates have gone down. The turnover rate wouldn't be so high in high schools if parents were able to be around more. No child should be left behind and time off for conferences and activities is an important start.





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Porsche Humphery
5080 N 22nd St.
Milwaukee, WI
414-461-8343

Single parent of 3

I drive the school bus and have to leave my house at 4am to start my day.

My oldest daughter has a speech impairment. I need to talk to more than one teacher to accommodate her special needs. I need to be there for additional meetings to keep in the speech classes. Right now, I can't really take off work and it makes it very difficult to be there for my daughter with special needs.

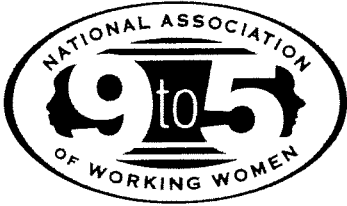
With my schedule, it's tough to make the busses to and from work on time for the different meetings at my daughter's school. My work is across town from the schools.

I am doing my GED right now, and would love to see my child graduate on time despite her speech impediment.

The AB116 would help me be there for my daughter with special needs to encourage her in the areas like math and speech. I would need to still get paid, but it's very important to at least have the time off to be with my daughter and other children when they need me at the day care.

A 5 year old doesn't understand that Mommy can't be with her because of work.





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Viva Crepe
Milwaukee, WI

Single parent of 4 boys. 2 school age.

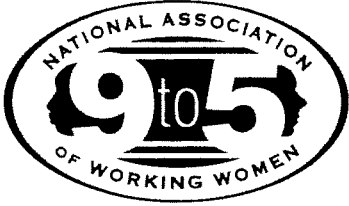
I am working in customer service

It's very difficult to get off of work for important things like school conferences. Not only do I lose the pay, I lose out on the significant things going on like recognition programs. I recently missed the scholastic achievements award held for my son. If I could have been allowed 2 hours away from work, it would have made a lot of difference. He mostly goes to school with more affluent mothers who are stay at home. I cannot afford to be a stay-at-home mother.

I have to go out of my way to go out of my way to prove I'm caring for my kids. It feels like I'm penalized for being a parent, a single parent.

It's necessary for many parents to leave work to attend our children's school activities.





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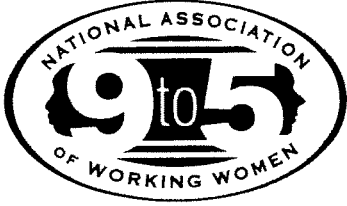
Gloria Williams.
Milwaukee, WI
414-393-8153

Parent of 1 school age

I work as a home health aid. I have a flexible schedule that allows me to be involved with my child. I try to deal with my son's school on a day to day basis. I talk to the teacher almost every day and am able to attend any meetings held after school.

It's always a benefit for me to be involved because a child knows that the parent really loves them and is looking out for their best interest. The teacher is so glad to see parents at the school. It reflects on the child and the parent as well.





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Carol Crites
Milwaukee, WI
Clergy

Parent of 1.

As a single parent especially, it was a tense situation to try and juggle between my job and my child growing up. Because I was the sole supporter, I struggled between the two when I was working in the corporate world.

I later went to seminary and became clergy. Here I had more time for school conferences at my child's school. I was able to schedule time in my day to be a parent now.

As clergy, I see the kids of parents who are struggling economically having to choose their job over their child. It's a decision they hate to make but are forced to.

