

February 16, 2002

Thank you Representatives Wittke and Thiesfeldt, for proposing Assembly Bill 968. Thank you for allowing my voice to be heard.

I am Julie Zaccaria, a resident of Brookfield, WI, and I have children in high school, one of whom unfortunately is still enrolled in the Elmbrook School District.

I support Assembly Bill 968, as it will allow for more Charter Schools to open, which in turn would provide children access to more educational opportunity, that might better align to serve their best interests.

This Bill not only provides an opportunity for children to have their best interests met with a broader range of educational opportunities for their parents to choose from, it allows for each district's standard public schools to improve, through competition.

Both the National Education Association and the National School Board Association are highly regarded organizations.

The NEA has determined through their research, there are 7 areas that are GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOL INDICATORS.

1. School Readiness
2. Standards and Curriculum
3. Conditions of Teaching and Learning
4. Workforce Quality
5. Accountability and Assessments
6. Family and Community Engagement
7. School Funding

The National School Board Association includes information on their website under the title ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS. They also list 7 elements of consideration.

1. Focus on the Total Child
2. Commitment to Equity and Access
3. Family and Community Engagement
4. Distributed Leadership
5. Strong, Supported Teaching Force and Staff
6. Relationship-oriented School Climate
7. Atoms of a Molecule

I do not dispute the 7 areas each of these organizations present as needed to make a school successful. But I feel I must point out that it is the content in each of these areas that makes the children/students, successful.

The NEA's website section titled "great public school indicators" is under a section of their website page titled "what students deserve". This page title states that "All students have a basic right to a great public school".

The truth is, students don't have any legal right to a great public school. Rather, legally speaking, parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and when placing their children's best interests as a priority, and having access to a charter school vs a standard public school, provides more likelihood of them reaching that goal.

Both the NEA and the NSBA's focus is on the quality of the school. Parents are more concerned about the quality of the education. With the opportunity for a parent to have a choice of public schools within their own district, by having more charter schools, children gain the opportunity to have their best interests met.

As stated by NSBA, the seven areas they list are not interchangeable. They describe that each school must combine the elements in different ways to fulfill each element. In other words, schools must balance these elements to provide a great public school. Parents on the other hand, parents have more of a balancing act to provide a great education to their kids.

Not only are parents looking at how the standard public schools have balanced their "essential elements", but how those 7 elements work within their family's structure, functions, and values. Many do not.

I can speak to this from personal experience. Elmbrook Schools main focus is on the element of school culture, also referred to as climate. (It is # 3 in NEA's areas and # 6 in NSBA's.)

This is the area/element the district places the most emphasis on. Their efforts are to provide a culture where feelings are central to everything else they do. Their culture is one of asking every student "how do you feel" rather than "what do you want to achieve". It is one of "you can turn your work in late and retake any test you want" rather than, "you are responsible for turning your work in on time and must prepare yourself for each test". It is one of "you can change your identity if you don't like who you are" rather than "you are valuable just as you are and should be proud of who you are".

Elmbrook's climate opposes my family's value system. It is not what I teach my children at home and it creates conflict within my children as well as in our family. This dynamic is also reflected in other families across our community.

Unfortunately, many families are stuck with this standard public school's balancing act of what makes them successful. As a parent, I have my own balancing act to provide the best education for my children – and I have very limited options.

Schools are basing their success on elements that allow them to function as an educational institute.

Parents are basing success on the outcomes of that education.

Charter schools are different from the traditional public school and many place their focus more on academics than social emotional health. They trust parents with their student's health just as parents trust them with their children's academics.

In addition to the benefits charter schools provide Wisconsin's children, they are beneficial to our State's economy and industry as well. They are better suited to prepare their students to support the workforce needs of economy and industry, which makes Wisconsin more attractive for investment and for bringing manufacturing jobs back to our state.

For example, a charter school can adopt industry accepted certifications and make it standard curriculum more easily than a standard public school. This would allow children in an underserved community, or anywhere, to leave high school with a range of certifications and/or capabilities that will afford them the opportunity to get good paying, family supporting jobs in manufacturing. This helps industry in Wisconsin by supplying skilled resources to support advanced manufacturing, which in turn attracts industry to invest in our great state.

In closing, please consider supporting Assembly Bill 968 as it will better provide for the children, families and economy of our state.



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February 16, 2022

Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of Assembly Bill 968, a proposal by Representative Wittke and Senator Darling regarding the creation of a charter-school-authorizing board to allow for more opportunities for independent charter schools.

Wisconsin's public charter schools can be authorized either by a local school district or a different governmental entity. Since the early 1990s, Wisconsin has grown the list of approved entities that can authorize charter schools. Today, there are seven categories of government entities that can authorize charter schools. The number of entities that can approve charter schools often used by opponents as justification for not adding more. But the reality is that most do not use this authority. In fact, out of 34 entities with the authority to authorize charter schools, only 5 of them—about 14%—actually use it.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Government Entity with Authorizing Power</b>	<b>Number of Charter Schools 2021-22</b>
Common Council of the City of Milwaukee	7
Waukesha County Executive	0
College of Menominee Nation	0
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College	2
UW-System Office of Educational Opportunity	7
<b>Any Chancellor of the UW System</b>	
UW-Milwaukee	15
UW-Parkside	1
UW-Eau Claire	0
UW-Green Bay	0
UW-La Crosse	0
UW-Madison	0
UW-Oshkosh	0
UW-Platteville	0
UW-River Falls	0
UW-Stevens Point	0

<sup>1</sup> DPI Quick Facts Wisconsin Charter Schools, [https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/parental-education-options/Charter-Schools/pdf/Wisconsin\\_Charter\\_Schools\\_Quick\\_Facts.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/parental-education-options/Charter-Schools/pdf/Wisconsin_Charter_Schools_Quick_Facts.pdf)



<b>Government Entity with Authorizing Power</b>	<b>Number of Charter Schools 2021-22</b>
UW-Stout	0
UW-Superior	0
UW-Whitewater	0
<b>Each technical college district board</b>	
Gateway Technical College	0
MATC	0
Blackhawk	0
CVTC	0
Fox Valley	0
Lakeshore	0
Madison College	0
Mid-State	0
Moraine Park	0
Nicolet College	0
Northcentral	0
Northeast	0
Northwood Tech	0
Southwest	0
Waukesha County	0
Western	0

The lack of active authorizers became a problem for Lake Country Classical Academy (LCCA), a charter school that opened this year in Oconomowoc. The school leadership spent a year-and-a-half reaching out to independent charter-school authorizers and local school districts. They met with a couple different school districts in the Lake Country area and even considered being an instrumentality charter school of either district, but neither district was interested. Ultimately, the leadership applied with three of the six independent authorizers, and fortunately the LCO Ojibwe College stepped up to support LCCA.

Once LCCA was authorized, they experienced a high demand for this alternative education option—a classical, content-rich curriculum paired with a more traditional pedagogy. Currently enrollment stands at approximately 400 students in grades K-9, which includes some families driving more than an hour each direction to get their kids to and from LCCA every day. The school recently held their lottery for new students for the 2022-23 school year. 96% of the current student population is returning next year, with a total of 471 students enrolled for next year. Another 265 students are currently on the waitlist, which is a huge testament to the community demand for alternative choices in public education.

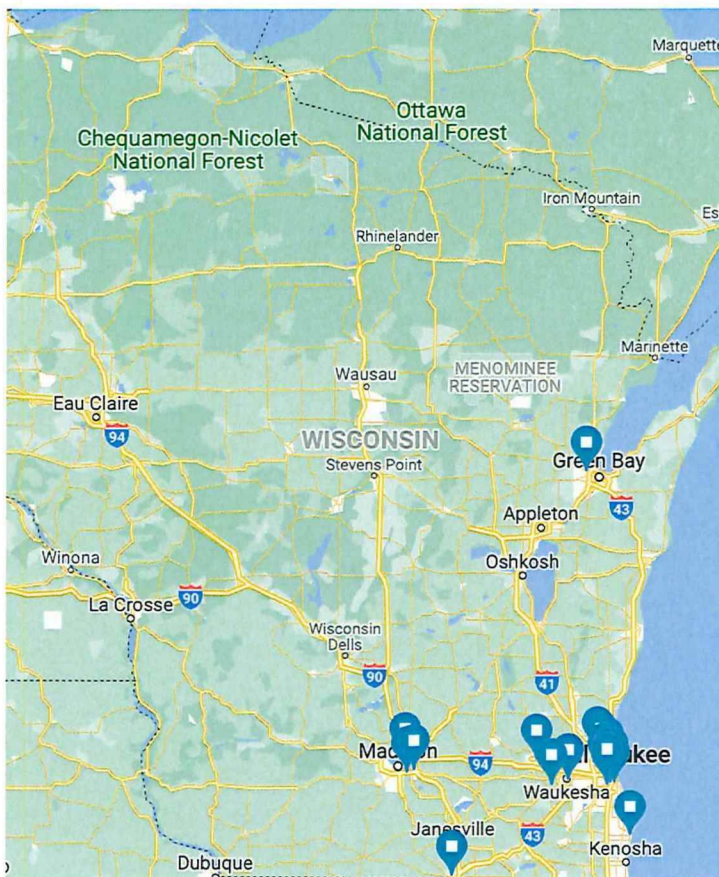
This demand for charter schools is not unique to LCCA. For example, the Office of Educational Opportunity more than doubled its number of charter schools from three in 2020-21 to seven in 2021-22. They are in the process of adding six more schools, four of which will open this fall,



and two more the following September. Similarly, charter school enrollment has grown over the last few years. In 2018-2019, enrollment in independent charter schools was just of 8,000 students. By 2021-22, average enrollment is expected to be around 10,500.<sup>2</sup>

AB 968 is the right response to the lack of participating authorizers and increased demand from Wisconsin parents. By creating The Charter School Authorizing Board, AB 968 gives the board the authority to authorize additional independent charter schools. This board could have a statewide focus and expand charter schools into new areas across the state.

Currently, many of the 32 independent charter schools are limited to urban areas, such as Milwaukee and Madison. Creating another authorizer that is not regionally specific will expand the options available for school leaders and parents. AB 968 also creates a board that is represented by the Department of Public Instruction, the state legislators and community members. The breadth of these appointments can expand the community representation statewide.



<sup>2</sup> DPI Historical Chart -Headcount and FTE of independent charter schools. The 2021-22 FTE count is not yet audited. <https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/charter-schools/current/2r-membership>



We urge the committee to support AB 968 and provide additional high-quality, public-school options to Wisconsin families.

Thank you,

Libby Sobiech  
Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty  
[libby@will-law.org](mailto:libby@will-law.org)





# Alberta Darling

Wisconsin State Senator · District 8

## Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Education Assembly Bills 967 & 968

Thank you Chair Thiesfeldt and committee members for taking the time to hear Assembly Bills 967 and 968.

These two bills are part of the Empowering Parents K-12 Education Reform Package to address the growing demand from parents to tailor their children's individual education, establish accountability, and encourage collaboration with educators. Increased scrutiny and parental involvement in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the need for fundamental educational reforms while presenting a once-in-a-generation opportunity for a course correction.

Assembly Bills 967 and 968 will increase access and availability of public charter school options in Wisconsin. Currently, over fifty thousand students in over 230 schools take advantage of this option and are enrolled in public charter schools throughout the state. Statistically, these non-traditional public school options outperform their traditional public-school counterparts.

Under current law, charter schools authorized by an entity other than a school board must have a duplication provision in their chartering contract. This duplication provision states that the governing board of the charter school may open one or more additional charter schools if all of the charter schools operated by the governing board were assigned to one of the top two performance categories in the most recent school and school district report cards. Assembly Bill 967 requires that charter schools authorized by school districts have the identical duplication provision in their chartering contracts. This bill ensures our highest performing charter schools do not need to go through hoops and hurdles to provide more students with this high quality public school option.

Also under current law, charter schools may be authorized by school boards, the City of Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin (UW)-Milwaukee, UW-Parkside, Madison Area Technical College, the Waukesha County executive, any UW institution, any technical college district board, the College of Menominee Nation, the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe



College, and the Office of Educational Opportunity in the UW System. Assembly Bill 968 creates a new Charter School Authorizing Board to approve new independent charter schools statewide. The ten member, bi-partisan appointed board will serve four year terms for no more than two consecutive terms.

Alternatives to traditional public schools continue to be in high demand for many parents. As parents continue to pursue these alternatives in historic numbers, it is more important than ever that we continue to look for ways to increase these high quality options. According to recent Department of Public Instruction numbers, independent charter schools reported a total third Friday of September 2021 headcount of 10,691, an increase of 15.6 percent from September 2020. The previous increase, from 2019 to 2020, was 1.5 percent.

I want to thank Representative Wittke for leading these efforts in the Assembly, and thank you again committee members for hearing Assembly Bills 967 and 968. I hope to have your support.

# CITY FORWARD COLLECTIVE

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February 13, 2022

City Forward Collective, a Milwaukee-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to eliminate educational inequity by ensuring every Milwaukee child has access to a high-quality school, is in support of AB 967/SB 965 and AB 968/SB 964, both of which address charter school authorizing.

We offer the following additional comments for information purposes to the committee:

- a. AB 967/SB 965 on automatic replication: we would note that while including district-authorized charters is a positive step, new schools in growing charter networks often take 4-5 years to reach the existing statutory eligibility requirements and thus the growth plans of typical high-performing charter operators could be slowed, and eligibility even harder to attain with the proposed report card changes
- b. Generally, regarding both bills: we believe there remain opportunities to make these two bills more impactful on growing high-performing charter schools, and we would welcome the chance to work with the legislature to offer amendments that would address other policy barriers to the expansion of high-quality charter schools that are not related to authorizing, including
  - i. Establishing model charter contracts that protect core autonomies for all charter schools (district-authorized and independently-authorized);
  - ii. Permitting entities that operate multiple charter schools to better coordinate finances and operations, by permitting operator-level financial audits and “feeder pattern” enrollment policies;
  - iii. Ensuring that federal aids received by a district or LEA on behalf of students enrolled in public charter schools are passed through to the charter operator; and
  - iv. Addressing inequities in funding levels between public charter schools and traditional public schools, including by increasing the per-pupil funding level for public charter schools, and by providing for public charter schools to be able to access local revenues generated via operating referenda



TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Education

FROM: Rachel Ver Velde, Director of Workforce, Education and Employment Policy

DATE: February 16, 2022

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 967 & Assembly Bill 968

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Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Assembly Bill 967 and Assembly 968. We thank Representative Wittke and Senator Darling for authoring these bills, which will expand high-performing charter schools throughout Wisconsin.

WMC is the largest general business association in Wisconsin, representing approximately 3,800 member companies of all sizes, and from every sector of the economy. Since 1911, our mission has been to make Wisconsin the most competitive state in the nation to do business. That mission includes making sure Wisconsin's youth are able to access to a good education so they are ready to participate in the workforce.

Assembly Bill 967 helps accomplish this goal by requiring that the contract between a charter school governing board and a school board allow the governing board to open additional charter schools if all of the current charter schools operating under the board are high performing. Assembly Bill 968 creates the Charter School Authorizing Board, attached to the Department of Public Instruction. This board will be able to approve charter school applications. These bills help circumvent bureaucratic hurdles and streamline the process to allow more charter schools to open throughout Wisconsin.

WMC supports expanding the authorizers of charter schools. We believe that Wisconsin charter schools are providing innovative solutions for students, including meeting community and student needs that many traditional public schools are unable to fulfill. Many employers are excited about charter schools that are incorporating career pathways, career and technical training and hands-on experiences into their curriculum. As Wisconsin employers are facing severe worker shortages, these innovative programs will help attract young people into high-demand, well-paying jobs that employers currently are unable to fill.

WMC urges Members of the Assembly Committee on Education to vote in favor of Assembly Bill 967 and Assembly Bill 968 to ensure our state's youth have access to increased educational opportunities.



**Testimony to the Assembly Education Committee  
Opposition to Assembly Bills 966, 967, 968, 970, 971, 975**  
submitted by the  
**Wisconsin Education Association Council**  
February 10, 2022

The Wisconsin Education Association Council, representing teachers and education support professionals in Wisconsin Public Schools, are opposed to Assembly Bills 966, 967, 968, 970, 971 and 975. These bills are circulating at a time when lawmakers should be working with parents and educators to help our students and develop sustainable solutions to the exodus of educators leaving the classroom. The following is a quote from WEAC President and teacher Peggy Wirtz-Olsen:

“Legislators need to stop politicizing our schools and pitting families against each other with divisive proposals. The supporters of these bills are making an already difficult job that much more complicated for educators. These bills are reckless and could cause the destruction of our public school system.

“The people who know best how these proposed laws would impact public schools – educators – can’t even attend the public hearing to give input because they are at work – keeping schools open and teaching students. We have not been consulted nor given time to educate the bills’ sponsors on the consequences of these bills on our students and classrooms. The bills’ sponsors are urged to take time to discuss these proposals with the front-line professionals who teach the children.”

Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, President  
Bob Baxter, Executive Director

Dear Representative Thiesfeldt,

I am writing to you today to ask for your support of education bills AB 966, 967, 968, 970, 971 and 975. As a parent of a child enrolled in a Wisconsin public school, I believe legislation is the only way to restore parental rights in our schools. As things stand now, I have little faith in our public schools, and I see no evidence that DPI wants to operate with parental input into our schools. I want parents and taxpayers to have a say in our children's education – not a faceless bureaucracy. I believe these bills are a step in the right direction. Thank you for giving parents a much needed voice.

Doug Dyer  
Elmbrook Parent and Resident

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to you today to ask for your support of education bills AB 966, 967, 968, 970, 971 and 975. All of these bills are vital to maintaining the integrity of our educational system. Wisconsin parents have lost all faith and trust in our government schools and DPI. These bills help to give authority back to the parents, taxpayers and stakeholders, to determine what is best for our children's education. Thank you for your service and commitment to improving our K-12 education system, and for helping to get Wisconsin schools back to success.

Most Sincerely,

Heidi Anderson  
Brookfield, WI

Dear Representative Thiesfeldt,

I am writing to you today to ask for your support of education bills AB 966, 967, 968, 970, 971 and 975. All of these bills are vital to maintaining the integrity of our educational system. Wisconsin parents have lost all faith and trust in our government schools and DPI. These bills help to give authority back to the parents, taxpayers and stakeholders, to determine what is best for our children's education. Thank you for your service and commitment to improving our K-12 education system, and for helping to get Wisconsin schools back to success.

Emily Donohue  
Elmbrook Parent and Resident

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to you today to ask for your support of education bills AB 966, 967, 968, 970, 971 and 975. All of these bills are vital to maintaining the integrity of our educational system. Wisconsin parents have lost all faith and trust in our government schools and DPI. These bills help to give authority back to the parents, taxpayers and stakeholders, to determine what is best for our children's education. Thank you for your service and commitment to improving our K-12 education system, and for helping to get Wisconsin schools back to success.

Thank you.  
Eric Valk  
950 Chester St.  
Brookfield, WI

February 16, 2022

Education Committee,

You are all sitting here and we're afforded an education that led you to public office and I want you to trade places and put yourself in the other person's shoes.

I am appealing to you all to be pro children of all ethnicities, sociology-economic backgrounds regardless of zip codes or circumstances. Times have changed and so should our public education and model. The last time Wisconsin made an education difference was back in 1990 when then Governor Republican Tommy Thompson, Rep. Democrat Polly Williams, Dr. Howard Fuller and Sen. Republican Alberta Darling voted in Milwaukee School Choice. The new bipartisan initiative went national and was featured on all major networks and 60 Minutes. Education models can not stand still. Some examples of progress; iPhones, streaming, autonomous cars, artificial intelligence in manufacturing etc...

Currently the United States public education is ranked #24th in the world and spends the most, we are not getting a return on our education investment dollars! Change with the times by expanding more existing successful charter schools in their local public school districts. Require public school districts who authorize charter schools to expand more campuses especially when they have proven to be high performers and in some cases out performing the local school district.

Parents are Sovereign over their children's education. **the ultimate overseer, or authority, in the decision-making process. Give parents a choice. We are not a one size fits all society.**

America prides itself on competition and not monopolies, case in point in Wisconsin with not expanding more charter schools.

Create a Charter School Authorizing Board so more individuals like myself who want to open one can, especially when the local school district won't. If the local public school is not offering a high-quality and meaningful curriculum to all students then let a charter be an option along with restoring trust of school families that has been lost in many of the public schools. Be collaborative and progress. Do not discriminate.

Leave an education legacy and empower our youth to be literate, engaged and civic minded Americans. A healthy educated citizenry is a prosperous human race.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Cheryle Rebholz