



**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
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The Honorable John Gard
Speaker, Wisconsin State Assembly
211 West, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Speaker Gard:

I am responding to your recent letter to Governor Doyle regarding the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.

I must take exception to your characterization that the Governor opposes increasing the enrollment cap. As you know, he has proposed to increase the enrollment cap by 3,000 spaces. Proposed legislation is being circulated and will be introduced to do just that. However, any increase in the cap must be accompanied by some very basic educational accountability that will ensure that students in this program are receiving the education that they deserve. A reform plan should also ensure that Milwaukee public schools are not severely harmed by the increase in the cap.

Your position on this issue appears to have changed over time. Earlier this session you passed legislation that would have increased the cap to 16,500 pupils—roughly 1,000 fewer spaces than the Governor's latest Milwaukee Education Package would provide. As you will recall, I met with you to discuss the Governor's proposals in early December 2005. At that time, you indicated that you would consider an increase in SAGE and some form of accountability but only if the cap was increased by 10,000 spaces or more and there is no financial help for Milwaukee Public Schools. More recently, news reports have indicated that you would like no cap on the program whatsoever. Combining that approach with no accountability likely will lead to more schools wasting state tax dollars on Mercedes Benz and taking students on field trips to McDonalds during the school day.

The Governor remains fully committed to ensuring that all students in Wisconsin receive a high-quality education—whether they attend public, charter, or choice schools. It is our sincere hope that we will be able to reach an agreement that not only provide educational accountability to help parents make the most informed choice they can for their children, but also provides financial accountability to state and Milwaukee taxpayers for the \$93 million of their tax money that is being spent on the voucher program this school year.

Sincerely,

Stephen E. Bablitch
Secretary