



AMERICANS
for TAX REFORM

February 16, 2022

Members of the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Education
From: Americans for Tax Reform

Dear Chairman Thiesfeldt,

On behalf of Americans for Tax Reform and our supporters across Wisconsin, **I urge you to support Assembly Bill 970**, legislation before the committee today that would improve education opportunities and outcomes in Wisconsin by empowering more parents with the resources to send their kid to the school that best suits their child's unique needs. Wisconsin has a storied history as the place where the school choice movement began with bipartisan support. Today 46,000 students use an education voucher to attend private school in Wisconsin. However, more children deserve and need the chance to attend better, safer schools. As such **I urge you and your colleagues to advance AB 970 today.**

There were only six states to have reading scores significantly drop over the past three decades and Wisconsin is one of them. Two out of every three Wisconsin fourth graders lack reading proficiency. Today roughly 20% of freshman enrolling in the University of Wisconsin system must take remedial math. Minority students suffer greatly because of substandard public schools. Before the pandemic even hit, less than 10% of black student in Madison schools were proficient in English, while only 11% were reading proficient in Green Bay schools. Despite the strides that you and your colleagues have made to improve the education system in Wisconsin, it's clear further reforms are needed to expand school choice and provide better education opportunities. The pandemic has only worsened education outcomes and caused kids to fall behind, making the need for reform that expands school choice all the more imperative.

AB 970 is a smart reform that will eliminate family income limits for voucher eligibility, grade entry points, and state enrollment caps so that more parents and children can utilize education vouchers. AB 970 would also support children who want to stay in their assigned public school, but would benefit from outside instruction and coursework from an approved provider, other education materials, and additional resources to supplement their public school education.

With the personal resources to move into the school district of their choosing and the ability to pay for private school tuition out of pocket, high income and wealthy families already have school choice. AB 970 would expand school choice so that more low- and middle-income families are also empowered with the resources to provide their children with better schooling options, ones that are better suited to the unique needs of an individual student. Enactment of AB 970 will help make it so the ability to access the best education is not limited to children in upper income households. Enactment of AB 970 would also help students who experienced

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pandemic-related learning loss to catch up and will free them from ever again being trapped in a school that refuses to do in-person learning.

Another smart reform before the committee today, one that would lead to better education outcomes and improved opportunities in Wisconsin's largest metropolitan area, is AB 966. AB 966 dissolves the Milwaukee public school system, terminates the board, and in the place of the existing school district that has proven too big to succeed, creates smaller school districts that are closer and more responsive to the kids, families, and neighborhoods they serve. This is certainly a bold reform, but such boldness is needed to rectify the serious problems plaguing Milwaukee public schools.

I thank you for your public service. As one of the 14 states where income tax relief was enacted last year, you and your colleagues commendably took action in 2021 to make Wisconsin a more attractive place to live, work, and do business. **In 2022, I urge you to build upon your previous efforts to make Wisconsin an even better place to raise a family, which you can do by passing AB 970 and 966.** If I or ATR can be of assistance, feel free to reach out to me or Patrick Gleason, ATR's vice president of state affairs, at pgleason@atr.org or 202-785-0266.

Sincerely,



Grover G. Norquist
President, Americans for Tax Reform