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Dr. Peter Blewett
President
Milwaukee Public Schools Board of Directors
2750 North 45th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53210

July 21, 2008

President Willie Hines
Milwaukee Common Council
City Hall
Milwaukee, WI 53201

Dear President Hines,

It is my understanding that the Milwaukee Common Council is considering legislation regarding Paid Sick Days. Although the Milwaukee Board of School Directors has not taken action on this matter, the Legislation, Rules, and Policy Committee of the Board unanimously passed a resolution that I submitted in support of the Paid Sick Days campaign, and I anticipate that the full Board will follow suit. Therefore, although I cannot speak for the Board on this matter, it is my position that the City of Milwaukee should enact such legislation.

In conversations with elected officials from the city, I frequently hear how our Mayor and the Council want to help MPS achieve its goal of closing the achievement gap as we increase the number of students who achieve at advanced levels. As I hear and reflect on this sentiment, it occurs to me that the single most effective thing that the City can do to assist Milwaukee Public Schools is to improve the quality of life for our least privileged citizens.

Although MPS schools with a high level of stability in their student populations achieve at impressive levels, the schools that enroll large numbers of students who live in poverty have to deal with poverty's associated problems, such as mobility, and, consequently, these schools have a more difficult time of realizing the high expectations that the Board has for all of our students.

Enacting legislation mandating Paid Sick Days will help MPS families achieve greater stability and reduce the absenteeism that occurs when students miss school because a parent or sibling is sick. Illness has a sharper impact on families who live in poverty, partly because the parents of these families are more likely to work at jobs that do not offer paid sick days.

You have an opportunity to make a tremendous difference in improving the lives of our poorest citizens and to afford them the promise of stability in tough times. When this promise is realized, the Board will be in a much stronger position to meet its goals of closing the achievement gap even as we do our best to help all of our students reach higher levels of achievement.

I therefore urge you to support this legislation. Thank you for considering this matter.

Respectfully yours,



Peter Blewett, PhD