



# MILWAUKEE DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

*Members of the Wisconsin State Assembly and the Wisconsin State Senate*

September 23, 2011

Members of the Milwaukee Common Council  
200 East Wells Street  
City Hall, Room 205  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Office of the City Treasurer  
200 East Wells Street  
City Hall, Room 103  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Office of the Mayor  
200 E. Wells Street  
City Hall Rm.201  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Office of the City Comptroller  
200 E. Wells Street  
City Hall, Room 404  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Common Council Members, Mayor Barrett, Treasurer Whittow, and  
Comptroller Morics:

As members of the Milwaukee Legislative Caucus, we are writing to request that you adopt and implement the Milwaukee Public School Board's proposal to break out the tax levy associated with the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) from the tax levy for Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) on all annual tax documents sent to taxpayers.

Inclusion of this information would amount to a simple act of truth in advertising and transparency in government. Milwaukee's taxpayers deserve to know exactly how much of their money is going to fund private and religious schools through the MPCP.

As you know, in 2010, state law compelled MPS to levy over \$50 million in taxes to subsidize the private and religious schools that make up the voucher program, over which MPS has no authority or control. This amounts to 17 percent of the total MPS tax levy going to non-MPS schools.

New legislation at the state level has expanded the voucher program in Milwaukee to allow private schools outside Milwaukee to participate, while removing all enrollment caps on the program. While the original intent of the voucher program was to provide educational alternatives to low-income students

who could not afford private school tuition, the new state laws raise the income limits on participants allowing middle-class families to use the publically funded voucher for private schools. Due to these policy changes in the state's 2011-2013 biennial budgets, the cost of the MPCP will rise significantly and likely exceed the state's official 2012 estimate of \$53.4 million.



In truth, Milwaukee taxpayers are being billed not only for the largest school district in the state, but also for the sixth largest, which is what the MPCP has grown to be with more than 21,000 students.

It is conceivable that over the next few years, if the program were displayed under the "Levy by Unit of Government" section of the tax bill, the levy for the MPCP could exceed that of Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) and it already exceeds the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) by nearly \$10 million.

At a time when our public schools statewide are forced to make do with at least \$800 million less in state aid over the next two years, spending on programs, like the MPCP, which levies public dollars for private schools will likely see a net increase of nearly \$17 million.

Our city's taxpayers deserve to know which programs are being funded with their tax dollars. This is matter of public accountability, transparency and good government. Again, we respectfully request that you break out and display the tax levy associated with the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program separately from the tax levy for Milwaukee Public Schools on all annual tax documents sent to tax payers.

Thank you for your consideration,



Sen. Chris Larson  
7<sup>th</sup> District

Rep. Sandra Pasch  
22<sup>nd</sup> District



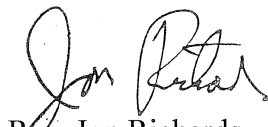
Sen. Tim Carpenter  
3<sup>rd</sup> District



Sen. Lena Taylor  
4<sup>th</sup> District





Sen. Spencer Coggs  
10<sup>th</sup> District



Rep. Jon Richards  
19<sup>th</sup> District



Rep. Christine Sinicki  
20<sup>th</sup> District

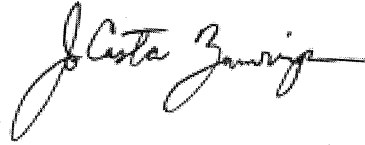


Rep. Tamara Grigsby  
18<sup>th</sup> District

Rep. Barbara Toles  
17<sup>th</sup> District



Rep. David Cullen  
13<sup>th</sup> District



Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa  
8<sup>th</sup> District



Rep. Fred Kessler  
12<sup>th</sup> District